

ADAM

FACT • FICTION • HUMOR

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AUGUST, 1973



**CRUISE TO
DANGER**

Page 26



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CONTENTS

FICTION

DESERT HIJACK	JOHN P. GILDERS	4
TOP END SAFARI	NAL REID	18
CRUISE TO DANGER	MARK GRAMM	26
REVENGE: SWEET AND SOUR	J. EDWARD BROWN	34
RODS OF THE DEVIL	NARLAN CLAY	40
ONE NIGHT IN A FOG	JOHN NAIRN	54

FACT

THE ASIAN CONNECTION	GRANT FREELING	10
THE ANCIENT RITES OF THE BATH	PAUL BRACK	16
CRUSOE OF MONTE CRISTO	RINO LO BELLO	24
TREASURE SHIPS OF THE WEST	PETER HASTINGS	30
WHEN THE MAFIA JOINED THE ALLIES	DONALD KERRIGAN	48

GIRL FEATURES

A SHORT SAFARI	12
BRIGHTLY SMILING	45

PIN-UPS	9, 23, 33, 59
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DESERT HIJACK

His load had been hijacked, but Ben was willing to risk his life so that this trip wouldn't be his last . . .

FICTION / JOHN P. GILDERS

THE SEMI-TRAILER churned up a white cloud of dust as it ground its way along the rutted dirt road. Ben Hudson wiped sweat from his brow. It was late afternoon and hot. He peered into the distance and felt dazed.

Maybe it was the vastness of the Nullarbor Plain which made him feel like this — mile upon mile of flat desert country stretching uneventfully, with low, stunted scrub a ghostly grey in the afternoon sun. Or maybe it was the benzodrine pills he had taken last night to keep him awake.

He blinked. He had to keep going. He had to be in Perth on Tuesday morning. The semi-trailer was loaded with cigarettes. It was a test run and back in Melbourne Sam Hatch, boss of East-West Roadlines, had told him the first act.

"If anything happens to this load, Ben, you're finished. You'll never drive again. I'll be to that!"

Ben shook his head grimly. On his last trip he had gone to sleep at the wheel and run off the road. The semi-trailer had turned over and caught fire.

East-West Roadlines had suffered a considerable loss and Ben was now in trouble.

He cursed his luck. He had been a truck driver all his life and it was more than just a job. He looked his dry lips. The road stretched into the distance, a never-ending ribbon of greyish white.

Ben had to stay with East-West

Roadlines. The pay was the best in the country and in another six months he would be clear of all past debts. Ben was an undischarged bankrupt. His own trucking business had been a dismal failure.

The sun was low on the horizon now. Ben screwed up his eyes and drove on. Hell of a road, he thought. You'd think they'd have someone right across the continent by now. It was a long trip — over 3000 miles from Melbourne to Perth.

Suddenly, he blinked. Way up ahead a figure stood in the middle of the road and waved.

Ben picked up speed. He noticed the Volkswagen parked off the track. He gave a low whistle of surprise as he saw the figure was a girl.

She had on black jeans tucked into black knee-length boots. She wore a brilliant red blouse which struggled to contain her full breasts.

Ben slowed, ground to a stop. He stared at the girl as she walked towards the cabin. Her eyes were brown and her lips full red, almost black. She had short, black hair.

"My car broke down," she said. "How about a lift?"

Ben took his hands from the wheel. "Is there anything I can do to fix it?"

"It's bad, mate. It's a write-off. The motor blew out."

"Oh," Ben said. He stared at her. "You're a bit game to be driving alone across the desert." He looked at the car. "Especially in an old bomb like that."

The girl shrugged. "I paid \$100 for the car. I thought it would get me to Kalbarrie."

"Huh," Ben grunted. He stared at her curiously.

"Well — are you going to give me a lift?"

"I'm not allowed to pick up hitchhikers."

The girl looked up at him, brown eyes hard. "You're not going to leave me alone out here in the middle of nowhere? What's the matter with you?"

Ben dropped his eyes. "I'm sorry," he said. He opened the cabin door. "Come on — get in." The girl climbed up into the cabin. She sat next to Ben, her face set.

Ben drove on. He looked at her from the corner of his eye. She's a pretty girl, he thought. Honey colored skin, even features — a touch of the exotic. Her figure was superb. His eyes dropped to her swelling breasts beneath the brilliant red blouse. "Where are you from?" he asked.

"Sydney." Her voice was clipped, harsh. She did not encourage conversation. She sat stiff, upright, staring silently ahead.

"What part of Sydney?"

"Kings Cross." Her reply was bitter, almost angry. Ben frowned. There was something wrong with this girl, he thought. She's only young, but there was a hardness about her. There was the look of experience in her brown eyes.

Ben drove into the setting sun. He

was silent for several minutes. "I'm Ben Hudson. What's your name?"

"Opal," she replied.

Ben grinned. The girl was tense, as if she was angry with herself. The horizon was a golden ball of flames now. He lit a cigarette. "What kind of work do you do?" he asked curiously.

She turned to face him. Her brown eyes poured into him. "You must be joking," she said.

Ben looked puzzled.

"What do you think a girl like me would do at the Cross?"

Opal looked at him. A half smile tugged at the corners of her red mouth.

"Kings Cross is the playground of Sydney," she said cynically. "I played there - for money. I never gave the cops an even break. Do you think I'm awful?"

"Not particularly."

Opal shrugged. She lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply. The semi-trailer rocked as it hit a pot hole. Ben changed gears. "What are you going to do in Kalgoorlie?"

"Kalgoorlie is the greatest gold mining town in the world," she replied. "I was told that there's a shortage of women over there. I'll be all right."

"I bet you will," Ben said sarcastically.

Opal shrugged again. She looked



at him. "Are you married?" she asked.

"No," he replied warily.

"It's a wonder a good looking bloke like you isn't married."

"Thanks."

"I like the tall, lean, sophisticated type."

Ben stared at her. "You're full of confidence, aren't you? You're not exactly the shy, retiring type. I've

never struck a bird like you before.

"Do you think I'm too smart?"

"Yeah."

The semi-trailer rolled on. It was getting dark now. A ghostly glow hung over the empty plain. Low bus-cars into view. Soon they would be in outback country. The last ray of the setting sun cast a golden arc in the West.

Ben dove on deep in thought. He turned and looked at Opal. "Honey, you got any ambition in life? A pretty girl like you?"

Opal did not answer. She stared straight ahead. Ben saw the slow frown spread across her honey brown features.

"I'm looking for a pot of gold," she said quietly. "It's out there somewhere in the West."

Ben grinned. "Poetic," he said. He hesitated. "I guess we're all looking for the same thing."

Opal nodded slowly. "Yes," she echoed. "We're all looking for the same thing."

Darkness blanketed the empty land and the dreams of the hour came to life. A kangaroo jumped into the road, stared at the headlights, eyes prominent of fire. Ben slowed. The kangaroo leapt high in the air and disappeared. Shortly afterwards a fox flashed across the road.

"There's a hotel at Eucaly," Opal said.

"I'm going straight through. Ben said gruffly.

"You must be tired."

"Yeah."

Opal moved closer to him, leaned against his shoulder. She sighed wearily. "I'm tired, Ben."

Ben wet his lips. Her closeness



"I think we can skip the usual do you like girls question."

Brooding pythons can't be moved

SOME REPTILES bring forth their young alive but the striped python is an egg layer.

She finds a dark place under a boulder in scrub country, lays her eggs and coils round them until they hatch.

Few people have encountered her while brooding but she is not in the least aggressive at the time. A small dog was once seen barking and sniffing at a large brooding python which would certainly have eaten him had she not been in a comatose state.

The striped lizard also lays eggs but buries them in the earth and leaves the hatching to nature.

disturbed him. There was a sexual smell about her. In the half light of the colon, he could well see deep into the valley of her breasts. Opal giggled closer.

Ben perched on the brakes.

He took her in his arms and kissed her. She clung to him, trembling with passion.

"We'll get a room," Ben whispered.

"Yes, love," Opal replied eagerly.

Sunlight filtered into the hotel room at Eucla and Ben turned in the double bed, half asleep. His hand fell across the bed, subconsciously feeling for Opal. He sat up with a jerk. Opal was not there.

Ben looked around the room. Her clothes were gone. She had left nothing behind. He frowned. She's probably at breakfast, he thought.

Hurriedly, he got dressed. He walked around the hotel looking for her. She had disappeared.

Ben stood in the open doorway and scratched his head. She couldn't have gone far. There was nowhere to go in this country. Nothing but hundreds of miles of uninhabited bush.

He looked down the road. He blinked. The semi-trailer was gone. He ran around the back of the hotel. It was not there. He searched his pockets for the keys. Nothing.

Emulation flooded him. He stared along the empty road and his mind grappled with the enormity of the thing. "She's pinched my bloody nose!" he roared. "Jeez!"

A middle-aged man came to the door and saw the look on Ben's face. "What's the trouble, mate?" he asked.

Ben told him. The man frowned. "She wouldn't take a semi-trailer just for a joyride. What were you carrying?"

Ben swallowed, face grey. He hadn't thought of that. "Cigarettes," he said. "About \$25,000 worth of cigarettes."

"Jeez!" the man said, over-read

Ben looked at him grimly. "She won't get her! I'll phone the West Australian police and the South Australian police. There's only one road across the country."

"Yeah," the man agreed.

Ben made his telephone calls and by this time everybody in the hotel was excited.



JOE ROBINSON

"It's even more of a surprise for me than you think . . . I'm stonik."

Ben paced up and down, smoking cigarette after cigarette. What had Sam Harch said? "If anything happens to this load, Ben, you're finished. You'll never drive again. I'll see to that!"

Ben couldn't stand the suspense. He saw the hotel manager. "I want to borrow a car," he said.

"You can take mine. What are you going to do? Search the road?"

"Yeah."

Ben decided that Opal would take the shortest route back to Adelaide. He headed east, fast. At the first gas station he stopped and asked the proprietor if he had seen an East-West Roadlines semi-trailer pass through early this morning.

"Nope," the man said.

"It could have been real early — before dawn."

"I hear everything which through. There's been nothing all night."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Absolutely certain," the proprietor said.

Ben frowned. He was not completely satisfied. He moved on. At the next gas station the answer was the same.

No semi-trailer had traveled east. Ben hit his lip. She couldn't have gone west. It was too far — nearly a thousand miles of bush. Late that afternoon he arrived back at the hotel in Encla. There were police messages for him from both sides of the border.

The semi-trailer had not been sighted at any of the regular stops, east or west. It had simply vanished into thin air.

The next morning Ben drove west. It was good to be back on the tarmac. The miles flew by.

men were dressed in old clothes. Nobody wore shoes. They grinned at Ben. "Got any tobacco, master?"

Ben gave the old man a pack of cigarettes. Everybody took a cigarette and puffed away contentedly.

Suddenly a young boy, about 11-years-old, ran out from the bush. His skinny body glistened with sweat. He snatched a cigarette and got a light from one of the women. The boy was dressed in shorts, nothing else. He talked rapidly to the old man.

The white bearded man nodded. He turned to Ben. "Boy says he lost track way out in bush last night."

"Where?" Ben demanded. The old man spoke to the boy again. The boy jabbered, gesticulated, pointed north.

Following the tracks. It was tough going but the heavy semi-trailer had flattened most of the taller scrub.

It was late afternoon when Ben found the East-West Roadfinder semi-trailer. It was camouflaged with branches, piled high with grey, lifeless bush.

"They'd never spot it from the air," Ben muttered. He examined the rear. The door had been smashed open and all the cigarettes were gone.

Smaller tracks led North.

Ben knew that a truck had been used to shift the cigarettes. He stared into the distance and frowned. There was nothing but 2000 miles of bush and desert ahead.

He got into the car and drove on. The setting sun glared on twin lines of steel converging in the distance. It was the Indian-Pacific railroad.

Ben drove alongside the railroad, following the tracks. It was dusk when he saw the railroad workers' camp. It looked deserted. A lonely water tank stood high on wooden legs between two roofed sheds. Empty 44 gallon drums lay scattered around. Two freight cars and a railway van stood silently together on a side track.

Ben stopped the car behind some low scrub. It couldn't be seen from the camp. He advanced on foot, nerves tingling. Voices came from the van. It was dark now and yellow light flickered from a kerosene lamp. Ben crept forward.

"Fancy leaving all this gear out in the bush," a man's voice said. "The railway department are pretty trusting. What do you think, Fred?"

"There's nobody around here for hundreds of miles," Fred replied gruffly.

Ben peered into the open door of the van. Two men sat on wooden boxes drinking beer straight from the bottle. Then he saw Opal.

She sat on a small carton staring out at the night sky. Her face was clouded. She was deep in thought. Ben passed his lips. The double-breasted hitch, he thought bitterly.

The man called Fred was thickset with heavy, square features. He had a scar on his forehead. The other man was tall and thin. Both were dressed in jeans and thick, cotton shirts.

"Anyway, it was a brilliant idea, Fred. Who'd ever think of looking in a Commonwealth freight car for a load of stolen cigarettes?"

"Nobody," Fred replied.

"The cops must wonder what happened."

"Yeah," Fred agreed. He drew on his cigarette. "They'll never find that semi-trailer."

Australia's most unusual animals

TO MEET A DINOSAUR in Australia a million or so years ago would be all in a day's adventures.

These 60 foot long creatures plodded across the countryside occasionally leaping apart similarly occupied dinosaurs (up to 40 feet long), mammoths (120 feet), ichthyosaurs or fish-eaters (30 feet), platytrichodons or frog-like animals (11 feet) and diprotodonts (10 feet).

The largest of all known Australian mammals was the diprotodon, which was about the size of a large rhinoceros.

However, the largest of the world's living marsupials is the kangaroo. It has been recorded that during one chase out west, one kangaroo leaped 42 feet while weighing more than 200 pounds.

The other animal on Australia's shelves — the emu — stands on two legs and moves. Its heavy body keeps it earth bound, but its tail doesn't hinder its speed as it can race over 30 miles an hour.

He glanced down at the map on his knees. Opal must have driven off the road into the bush. To the south, there was nothing but the desolate coastline of the Great Australian Bight. To the north, the Indian-Pacific railroad formed the longest straight stretch of track in the world.

Ben saw movement ahead along side the road. It was a group of Aborigines. He stopped the car.

A white bearded Aborigine approached him. "Wanna buy a boomerang, master?"

Ben shook his head. "I'm looking for a semi-trailer. It's got East-West on big red letters painted on its side. Have you seen it?"

The old man scratched his head. His face wrinkled. He turned to the group by the roadside. He spoke in his native tongue. The men looked at each other and two women in cheap cotton dresses tutted.

"No track, master."

Ben watched. He looked at the curious black faces all around. The

"How far?" Ben asked.

"Long way."

Ben gave the old man all the small money he had. He got back in the car and drove on, searching the road on the right hand side. The semi-trailer must have left tracks.

An hour later he stopped. "They've covered up their tracks," he muttered. "It's hopeless."

He drove back slowly. Low scrub stretched into the distance. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack. Ben decided to take a chance.

He drove off the road and headed north-east through virgin country. The car bounced and rattled over the rough ground. Ben slowed. He wondered if the car could stand up to this kind of treatment. Low brush scratched the windshield. Suddenly, he stopped. Tracks.

He grinned sourly. His guess had paid off. The semi-trailer had been driven north through the bush. Ben drove the bouncing car forward,

(Continued on page 78)





The ASIAN Connection



The US Government was not going to help their man in any way if — and when — he succeeded in helping drug traffickers smuggle \$60 million worth of pure heroin from Thailand to the States.

FACT / GRANT FREELING

FIFTEEN MINUTES after he agreed to help smuggle \$60-million worth of heroin from Thailand to the United States aboard a military transport ship, Sergeant First Class Frank Loder was given frightening evidence of what would happen to him if he betrayed his employers.

All right, it's a deal," Loder — a tall, red-haired Oklahoman in his

late twenties — told Chung Li, the boss of Bangkok's drug traffic.

The racketeer's two hulking bodyguards left through the rear door of the gambling house and entered his Mercedes-Benz limousine. They drove through the dark back streets of Bangkok, halting at a warehouse less than a block from the grossy mouth of the Mae Nam River.

Frank Loder almost gagged when he saw what awaited them inside. The men, who had the plump, obsequious features of a native Thaiander, stood on an upended oil drum.

A noose fashioned from being wire had been looped around his neck, the other end was tied to a nailer. The victim's feet were bare and he was balanced precariously on the tips of his trembling toes.

"He has been on that drum for seven hours," Chung Li explained calmly, lighting a cigarette. "It is impossible for him to stand on the soles of his feet. If he did so, he would choke. And the noose has

been tied in such a way that whenever he lowers his head, the wire tightens a little. One man actually managed to stay alive for 18 hours. Amazing."

"What did he do?" the stunned Loder asked.

Chung Li shrugged. "He is a worker in one of our refineries. Yesterday he was caught trying to smuggle out four ounces of heroin in the lining of his jacket. Undoubtedly, he would have sold it locally."

"But four ounces isn't worth more than 100 bucks in Bangkok," Loder said.

"That isn't the point. He violated our trust. If he had stolen 10 pounds or just a few grams, the punishment would be the same. Now I want you to end his suffering. Sergeant Loder. Remove the oil drum."

Representing a shudder, he strode over to the drum and looked up at the Thai's gray, pale-tipped face. Then he kicked over the drum.

He expected the man to die of strangulation. What actually happened was even worse. He plunged down a few inches and the thin, razor-like wire tightened like a noose, severing his head from his body. Loder frantically backed off.

"Japan!" he gasped. "Japan!"

Chung Li smiled. "You can take a shower back at my apartment. One of my women will wash your clothes — and provide other services if you wish them. I am sure you will have forgotten the whole thing by morning."

But, of course, Frank Loder wasn't supposed to "forget the whole thing". He had been handed a grisly

order by his superior officers to be a fearless, quick-thinking combat soldier.

Twice he was recommended for battlefield commissions — and both times he involved himself in off-duty activities that brought him to the wings of court martial. After his second combat tour, Loder was sent through supply school in the United States.

In August, 1971, Frank Loder was again assigned to Southeast Asia. At this point in the bloody Vietnam war, the Army Special Forces were pulling out of secret bases in Thailand and Cambodia, deep jungle areas where native mercenaries were trained for behind-the-lines attacks against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese.

Loder's job was to supervise the inventory, crating and shipping of delicate cryptographic and radio monitoring equipment located at a base in the rain forests north of Phnom Penh. The vital material was to be shipped out of Bangkok on December 3, aboard the US cargo ship *Thomas Edison*, one of the many civilian vessels used by the Army for freight transport.

Loder fell into his usual life style in Thailand. On duty, he performed his work with cool efficiency. Off duty he gambled and drank with gusto, spending every weekend in Bangkok, 90 miles south on the Mae Nam River.

He soon became a familiar figure on the "Alley of Demons", a street housing gambling casinos and opium dens. Although Loder never officially admitted it, he also allegedly dealt in Bangkok's thriving black market, selling cigarettes, whisky and pilfered military equipment.

"No trained undercover man impersonating a greedy, pleasure-seeking, irresponsible slab could have done a better job than me," Loder ruefully told the Bangkokian newsmen. "What actor can top the real thing?"

The preliminary offer came on November 11. Loder had just lost more than \$700 at roulette in one of the casinos owned by Chung Li. At the time he had never even heard of Chung, the Chinese-born ruler of Bangkok's underworld.

"I'm alerted out," Loder said when he went back to the casino bar. The bartender — a young, cheerful Thai named Tue Pinn — nodded sympathetically. He and Loder had become friendly in the three months that the American had frequented the Alley of Demons.

Farmers with little worries

THERE ARE NOT MANY hazards associated with irrigation farming, but one which some farmers out west are experiencing is the borrowing habit of the rat.

It happens especially when the weather has been unkindly dry, and the industrious, eager creatures are storing up their lenders with grain seed, waiting for the rain-breaking drought.

No, they're not the rats. Argemone, wood-eating species, but hell with long, ordinary black rats.

These home-loving insects dig into an irrigation channel, and keep going — up, down, and out through the sides.

When the rains come — in their storming abundance — farmers must quickly to shift and start spilling so water doesn't gush over the sides and wash the clogged earth away.

But sometimes the task gets madder and madder, as the rats run across the tops of the water-clogged channels to feed themselves in the fields.

Beads of cold sweat broke out on Frank Loder's forehead. He knew that he was trapped. If he refused, Chung Li's bodyguards would kill him on the spot. And nothing he did would save the tortured man's life. He understood the reason for Chung's actions.

Loder was pledged to handle the biggest heroin shipment ever smuggled from Southeast Asia to the United States. Murdering the man on the drum would hand him further to the narcotics ring — and provide a vivid example of what would happen to him if he betrayed it.

"Why are you hesitating?" Chung Li asked drily. "I know your record, Sergeant. You killed many men in Vietnam."

"In combat."

"All life is combat. It is only the ways that differ."

The taller of the two bodyguards reached into his jacket and took out a .38 revolver. Loder had no choice.

personal vendetta that would haunt him through the dangerous weeks ahead, preventing him from ever putting out of his mind the savage vengeance of the Kuomintang secretariat.

What Chung Li and his vicious confederates didn't know was that the "betrayal" had already occurred. Frank Loder was on a special mission for the US Army Criminal Investigation Division — part of a two-continent plan to smash Asia's largest, most dangerous criminal empire.

Sergeant Frank Loder was an unlikely choice to become a CID undercover man. A native of Beebe, Oklahoma, Loder had gone into the Army straight out of high school, signing up for the elite Special Forces in the early sixties.

During the decade that followed, he pulled two combat tours in Vietnam, won the Silver Star and two Purple Hearts and was con-

A SHORT SAFARI





A SHORT SAFARI

Are you ready for a tropical retreat?

Well, Cindy is.

Can't you tell from the rug, the trees and the big banana leaves.

The white safari slacks weren't made for walking far,

But don't be late,

I don't think she'll wait.



The ancient rites of the bath



Lord Snowdon designed the famous bathroom (above), which blows bubble water air — and presumably water at the point. It is part of a new, trend bathroom — although the trend to (right) has probably been around for Roman days.

Left: Here is a modern version of a subjective choice. The solid or fiber bath has been replaced as Lucinda has which you would never associate with elegance.

Below Left: This transparent tub is a latest fashion in baths. However, since it is made of crystal, acrylic and polycarbonate it is very expensive. The first tubs are now the State of the Art.



Bathing nude with both sexes all in together was first recorded in history in Ancient Greece and Rome. The progress of the bath to the humble, porcelain tub, was not an easy one.

FACT / PAUL BROCK

THERE ACTUALLY was a time when mixed nude bathing was the accepted symbol of total togetherness and spiritual purity. A truly ordained way of life was unthinkable for both sexes without a study of this art. It had its origins in strange magic rites.

Water, the giver and the destroyer of life, was worshipped by ancient peoples who believed, long before the Christian ceremony of baptism was known, that it had the power to wash away all sin. Bathing together in the nude was not merely a daily routine job. It was full of mysterious importance.

Until quite recently it was believed in certain parts of Europe that on Midsummer's Eve the sun and the moon bathed together in the lakes. On that night, people would wash themselves in the sea, in rivers or naked in the dew, believing they healed themselves spiritually. Homer tells us how the beautiful exuberance, Circe, used her naked body in cold water to induce ecstasy and dreams.

To the Greeks, nude mixed bathing was not merely a means of scrubbing away all outward signs of dirt. It was part of that daily regenerative process without which life was considered incomplete.

The act of bathing was almost a ritual. It was preceded by strenuous physical exercise and it was followed by philosophical discussion, when the body was relaxed and the mind alert.

Most of the Greek vase paintings show these highly intelligent people energetically raising their nude bodies under shower. They also

deeply loved a hot bath. According to Homer, "the things in which we take a personal delight are the feast, the lyre, the dance, clean linen in plenty, a hot bath and our beds." The baths were big and made of marble, glass or bronze and beautifully decorated with carvings of flowers, cups and religious symbols.

The Romans glorified the bath to such an extent that its extravagance eventually destroyed it. How magnificent the public baths must have been in their hey-day! The floors were made of bright-colored marble mosaics, enormous pillars of alabaster and rare marbles supporting the ceiling, and the walls were clad with marble and decorated with stucco reliefs.

The finest sculptures of the age were exhibited in the galleries at the Roman baths, and the sunbathers were constantly refreshed and delighted by streams of water splashing into marble basins from the mouths of silver lions.

(Continued on page 70)



Drexel Flagg wasn't just on another job, he was out to save the reputation of a foreign-owned mining company.

FICTION / MAL REID

Top end

DREXEL FLAGG pushed his bulky frame deep into the tilt-back chair and gazed thoughtfully through the window of his well-appointed office on the 18th floor.

The view, overlooking city rooftops and extending across the river and down picturesque St. Kitts Road, was not the best in the world but it pleased him. His hard brown eyes softened momentarily as he allowed himself the luxury of enjoying a pleasant sensation of well-being. Raised voices in the outer office seemed far away until the paneled door was suddenly flung open.

"I am sorry, Mr Flagg," Julia, his secretary, came into the room first. Her pretty face was flushed in anger. "The gentleman wants to see you — without an appointment."

The man trying to edge past her was tall with reddish blonde hair and a wispy moustache which did nothing to improve his thin facial appearance. "I have to talk to you, Flagg!" he said in a high-pitched voice.

Flagg swivelled around in his chair and coldly surveyed the intruder. The man, still standing uncertainly at the door, was no stranger to him. "Okay, Julia."

The girl backed out and slammed the door behind her in a final indication of disapproval.

"Sorry for barging in like this, Drew." The tall man advanced awkwardly across the thick white carpet and, still with some uncertainty, lowered himself into a moulded chair. Flagg watched him with interest. Whatever compelled Lawrence Sinclair to come to this office would be worth hearing, he decided.

Until a year ago they had been employed by the same powerful mining company. It had been challenging and exciting but Flagg, who was no shrinking violet when it came to getting what he wanted, gradually began to notice the changes within the company as the mining boom lost momentum. He watched with disconcerted concern as its hard

earned reputation for fair-play and integrity was steadily eroded away.

Men like Sinclair began to exploit the situation. Short-term results were all that mattered. They began to cut corners. The company's major asset — its experienced staff — became disillusioned and depleted.

Flagg, whose loyalty was unquestioned, watched these events with dismay until, finally, he could not tolerate the situation any longer and resigned. Now, he sat in his office staring with no hint of friendliness at Sinclair.

Sinclair lit a cigarette. His large hands, with long fingers and button nails, were unsteady. "I'm in — that is, the company is in trouble, Drew," he said quietly.

Flagg remained impassive. "I was aware of that a year ago."

With visible effort Sinclair controlled himself. "This problem is more specific. You see we are in the middle of negotiations with a small exploration company which claims that it has a rich uranium find in the Northern Territory. You know the routine. We usually arrive at a joint-venture arrangement and supply the expertise and most of the money on an intensive exploration program. If it is successful we get a controlling interest in the venture."

Flagg nodded. He was mentally counting the time this was taking and his standard rate an hour as a consultant.

"Anyway," Sinclair continued in a voice which had a trace of a Glasgow accent, "the managing director of the other enterprise suddenly informs me that there has been a change in plan. He now wants 70 percent of the action together with a substantial cash settlement — and the contracts drawn up and executed before the end of this week."

Flagg strikes at disbelief. He smoothed back the greying hair on his temples. "You naturally told him what he could do?"

"There is a complication," said Sinclair. "You see during the negotiations I instructed one of our own



assignment





"You bloody what?" Drexell Flagg controlled an impulse to lean across the polished desk and smash his fist into the visitor's face.

Sinkler chose to ignore this. "They have now issued the ultimatum that if we do not agree to their outrageous terms they will turn our men over to the Darwin police and report the trespass to the Mines Department and to the Press. You know how the newspapers like to get hold of a thing like this — especially foreign-controlled companies."

Flagg eased himself from the chair and looked down with ill-concealed contempt at Sinkler. "An interesting story but why bother me with it?"

For the first time he was aware of the fear in the other's eyes. Here was a man who had to get results at any cost to satisfy the exploration arm of a hungry mining giant. No commercial discoveries had been made for several years and the desperate short-cuts were now beginning to backfire.

"I am asking you for help," said Sinkler simply.

"Why me?"

"Dear, I have to get out of this mess somehow and you can help — not because of me but because you have spent too many years with Crator to let it be dragged in the mud."

Flagg watched the midday traffic banking up in the street below the curtained brow crinkled. It was true, of course. He cared nothing about Sinkler's plea but there would be no satisfaction in seeing what was once a fine company go to the wall. "What do you want of me?" he asked.

attempts to charter a helicopter from Darwin and fly over the area with a theodolite to ascertain if there really is any interesting prospects in that area."

The several seconds of almost-silent silence Flagg drummed his fingers lightly on the edge of his armchair, trying to remain uninvolved. "Apart from jeopardizing the company's future in several explanations by deliberately misapprehending the Mines Department," he almost whispered. "There was a time when Crator Consolidated would never consider the thought of backing out with another party during negotiations."

"It was this reputation which kept a string of new prospects in front of us and made the company a successful one. If this sort of thing became public knowledge how many potential commercial mineral deposits do you think would be brought to your notice? Prospecting parties would think twice before revealing information to a company which would treacherously be used for its own benefit. Even in this game there is such a thing as ethics."

Sinkler shook his head.

The eyebrows crinkled on Flagg's desk. "Would you like another brought in by Flagg?" the secretary's voice was strident.

Flagg looked across at his visitor. "No thanks, Pete." He turned again to Sinkler with impatience. "For God's sake get on with this verbal story. My time is valuable."

The problem is that we now have one geologist and one helicopter pilot stuck in the middle of their Prospecting Authority — and they know it." Sinkler clasped the minute yellow hairs on the back of his itched hand.

"I understand that the helicopter landed near one outcrop and while our geologist was chipping samples a couple of armed men took them by surprise." His face suddenly colorated in anger. "I instructed the bird not to land for samples."



"Leave it to Perkins to figure out a way to get a day off."

Possums have a liking for roses

WE SOMETIMES READ of "possum" nests" in the papers but many people in the South have yet to see one.

In reality, few possums are not attracted to live in a hollow limb and will move to another area if suitable trees are lacking, in spite of matter if the trees have been replanted and are dead, as long as food is available.

The possum's food starts from station to station and ranges from sugarcane to corn. There is little chance of it ever starving for, like the cat, it will eat practically anything, not excepting meat.

Kangaroo rats and bandicoots are mini-eaters — the next being a mass of grain packed into a hole in long grass. The kangaroo rat is reported to curl its tail round grass to carry it to the nesting place.

Snider relaxed. "You have a reputation for getting things done. Officially you have no connection with Crater. Just get up there and straighten out the mess quickly and without publicity."

Flagg smiled without humor. "I have my own conditions."

Snider stopped contemplating himself.

"Firstly I want my fee paid in advance — 35000 in advance."

Snider nodded in agreement.

"Also," continued Flagg, "I have no intention of flying up there by regular airline. I want the company's private jet put at my disposal."

The other man gasped. "Some of the directors are flying to Perth tomorrow for a conference so that's impossible. I would have to tell them the reason for all this."

Flagg laughed. "That is your problem. And I want one of your people to accompany me. A geologist with knowledge of the area and who can be pleasant company as well. Helen Meadows will do."

With detached interest Flagg watched for outward signs of the conflict which raged within Snider. The girl, a qualified geologist, was Snider's personal assistant and — it was rumored — the relationship was even more personal than that.

"You are a bastard, Flagg!" For a brief moment it appeared that Snider was about to launch himself at the other.

Flagg turned his back and silently gazed out the window again. He heard the door behind him.

It was cold and showery when Derek Flagg arrived at the airport next morning. The Esplanade facilities were practically deserted since commercial passenger traffic had moved further out to the Tullamarine terminal. He strode quickly across the shiny wet tarmac to the twin-engined jet which had been waiting over for some minutes awaiting his arrival.

The smiling hostess greeted him and closed the door behind him. The company usually arranged for a girl from one of the commercial airlines to serve refreshments to senior officials on long flights. The sudden rearrangement of plans had not allowed cancellation of this service.

The eight comfortable seats, the bar, the writing table and lounge — it was just as he had remembered it. Only the attractive brunette sitting in one of the seats was an improvement.

"Hello, Helen," Flagg said.

"You have a damned nerve dragging me off like this!" Her dark eyes flashed.

Flagg leaned over and squeezed

her arm. They had been close friends in the past whenever their work had brought them together. Apart from her other attributes he had a high regard for her geological knowledge.

After a good breakfast, Flagg settled back to enjoy the journey.

It was late afternoon when the small jet touched down at Darwin airport. Helen had by this time thrown sufficiently to be unresponsive.

"I understand from messages coming in that our geologist and pilot are held in the Black Ridge area — that's on this side of the West Alligator River. Geologically it's a very interesting place," explained the girl as they drove into the town.

"The D.C.A. has been informed that the helicopter has engine trouble and have asked no awkward questions so far."

Flagg grunted. He stepped out of the town and held the door open for Helen. Even in the half-light he was appreciative of her trim figure. "How far is it to this Black Ridge area?" he asked.

"Straight down the highway for about 90 kilometers and then almost due east for another kilometer into rough country. It will take three or four hours of good driving to get there in the dark."



"You know I'm the last one in the world to say anything about Janet and it's driving me out of my mind!"

Flag grinned. "We are booked into a motel. You need the rest."

The girl glanced sideways at the big man. "I was told that this is a top priority job. We should start travelling tonight. Besides," she smiled apologetically, "at the fee you are getting for this job you should be keen to finish it as quickly as possible."

Drexell Flag frowned. "Money has little to do with my accepting this. I just dislike seeing a good young company sink into the mire because of a few incompetents." He banged his fist on the office door. "Where the hell is everybody?"

Facilities are not exactly first class, are they? We shall just have to take what is available."

"You," he commanded the youth, "tash a 44 gallon drum to the back of the Landrover and take it to the service station — hold it!" He looked at the other with suspicion. "On second thoughts just put the drum in and I shall have it filled."

The small office was oppressively hot. Flag helped himself to a couple of Cokes from a drink dispenser and handed one to Helen. "This is not exactly my kind of drink but perhaps we can mix things later."

comfortable after turning east onto a dirt track. The travellers leaped into silence as the horses dragged on.

The girl shook a torch onto the map on her knee. "We are in the general area and the track peters out soon. Then it will be cross-country driving."

Flag stopped the vehicle and slid his arm around her smooth shoulder. "The moon should be out soon. Let's wait until then before we tackle the rough stuff."

Helen extracted herself gently. "Can we talk about you and this job?"

Drexell Flag chuckled and lit a cigarette. "It is difficult to explain," he said. "I have no connection with the company now, as you know, but I have invested several years of my life in it and if this mess can be cleared up I hope a lesson can be learned from it. Of course the money is also acceptable."

The rifle barrel poked into the side of Flag's thick neck and he heard the unsettling click of the safety release. "Just remain calm, Mr. Flag," said the soft voice. Someone climbed into the back seat of the Landrover. "Now drive forward — carefully."

The vehicle bumped through the bush in second gear. They knew we were coming, thought Flag. So much for the pompously-faced youth at the Darwin office. He glanced at the girl beside him.

Thirty minutes later a settlement loomed dimly into view. Although it was still dark Flag could discern what appeared to be a typical exploration camp. Two canyons stood beside the only sizeable tree in sight.

A portable shower was set up near these and on the other side of the small clearing was a mobile dining rig and miscellaneous exploration equipment. Only the large prefabricated workshop indicated that this was a main base. There was a light in the shed. "Drive right in," commanded the unwelcome passenger.

Their arrival was evidently no surprise to the base party. Three sobered men awaited them. "No trouble," called the voice in the rear seat. "They were sensible."

Flag squinted into the bright disintegrating light. He opened the door for Helen and was aware of the appreciative grin on the unknown face of the man with the rusty-looking, double-barrelled shotgun.

In a corner of the shed, on the dirt floor sat two dishevelled figures with hands tied behind their backs.

(Continued on page 82)

Our notorious penal settlement

ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S most notorious penal settlements is set in the pretty little township of Port Arthur on the Tasman Peninsula of Tasmania.

Some of the convict buildings which have fallen into ruin have been renovated and put to good use, but always they evoke the agony of suffering men, women and children.

When they died they were buried on a beautiful spot only a rowing boat's distance from Port Arthur, called the Isle of the Dead.

Hardly two acres in all, its highest point is occupied by the graves of the "free" people — soldiers, marines, chaplains, and their wives and children.

Below it are the graves of the convicts — several hundreds of them — six and eight to a grave. Many children are buried there, in fact, 500 boys between nine and 15 were transported to Port Arthur.

One who lies there is little Thomas Williams, who at eight years of age was found guilty of stealing a bottle valued at two pence.

To keep prisoners from escaping from Port Arthur across to Tasmania, a string of three dogs was chained along Englishman's Neck — a neck of land, measuring to a width of only 45 yards, which joins the Tasman Peninsula to the mainland.

Here, too, men fed sharks to guard these troubled waters against those who would plunge into them to escape their troubled lives.

The door opened slowly. A tall young man in jeans and anglet gazed at the couple. "Tim, please closed at 5 pm."

"We are from Melbourne," said the girl. "Surely you're expecting us."

"I thought you would call in the morning." The young man kept the door half closed.

Flag glanced impatiently at his watch. "Look, sonny, we are in a hurry." He nudged the door open, forcing the other off balance. The youth backed away.

"We need a Landrover — right now!" demanded Flag. He wondered at the lower caliber of staff the company was now employing.

"There is only one vehicle in town tonight — and the radiator leaks." The youth scowled at the newcomers. "I was going to the drive-in now and have it repaired tomorrow."

Flag turned to the girl. Her lips were parted in a half-smile. "The

"Perhaps," promised the girl.

Outside, the Landrover roared into life and its headlights flashed through the leaved windows to form horizontal patterns on the opposite wall.

"You and your friend collect a few days' provisions — there must be field rations around here somewhere — and I'll go to the service station," Flag shouted over his shoulder.

The drive southward on the main highway was refreshing. Apart from the occasional semi-trailer heading into Darwin there was very little traffic. It was well into the wet season but the rains had not yet arrived. Flag hoped they would hold off. The prospect of sitting out in a bogged vehicle for several days did not appeal to him. He glanced at Helen. Upon reflection he decided that it might not be too uninteresting.

The journey became more un-



CRUSOE OF MONTE CRISTO

When his friend, Luigi Gasperini, forgot to return to the Isle of Monte Cristo to pick up Lo Bello, the lonely adventurer found himself very much a Crusoe.

FACT / NINO LO BELLO

THIS IS A STORY about Monte Cristo — the island, not the Count.

Although the famous name immediately brings to mind Alexander Dumas' unkillable swordsman, Monte Cristo is that tiny dot of land 38 miles off Italy's Tuscan coast which has had a supernatural curse for more than 2000 years.

Which is possibly why it is still uninhabited today.

Polled in fiction and in legend, the Island of Monte Cristo has defied human habitation for some centuries. Over the years groups of hardy pioneers have tried to establish colonies on the six square miles of volcanic rock between the Italian mainland and Corsica. Which is why I decided to make like Robinson Crusoe there.

Last summer I got a cruddy bag in my hand. Together with my bright ideas about Robinson Crusoe, I decided to try my hand at living for 48 hours on the famed people-less island, just like Daniel Defoe's hero. The idea really incensed me.

Though I had been working in Italy as a television man some seven years, I had never met a single soul who ever visited Monte Cristo. So one evening I called Luigi Gasperini — he's a commercial fisherman — and he agreed to deliver me the next morning to the little speck of earth. He also agreed to ferry me back at noon two days later.

I guess I should have put more importance on old Gasperini being stowed to the gills when he took me out there. But then Luigi was always blabby with booze — it seemed his natural habitat. Besides, I was too eager about the whole deal to worry about such minor details.

But I should've known better.

Minor details aren't so minor when they bring on major troubles — old Gasperini forgot about me, and I ended up spending 23 days marooned on a deserted isle.

Abandoned on that god-forsaken chunk of real estate, I was nearly 40 miles from the mainland — but it might just as well have been 4000. Swam that far, I never could. I was stuck — boy, was I stuck. The realization hit me like a tidal wave.

Before leaving for the island, I had done a bit of research on its history. Centuries ago an emperor of the Roman Empire built a villa on Monte Cristo, but according to historical account, he and his subjects fled in desperation from the huge rats which ruled the island. Finally later invaded the insular rock and ended away every vestige of the lavish palace.

In 1852 an English nobleman got legal control of Monte Cristo and decided to defy the so-called curse. As for the rats, he figured they could be handled. But after a few hectic months he threw in the sponge.

"I am abandoning the property," he said in a report to the Italian government, "because the multiplicity of rodents makes life there a virtual impossibility." A few years later, during the 1870s, the Italian Government toyed with the idea of making a Devil's Island penal colony on Monte Cristo. The project however, was soon abandoned, too many rats again.

After World War I another aristocrat got possession of the archipelago and offered it to Italy's King Victor Emmanuel III as a gift. The monarch, wanting a retreat where he could putter over his vast stamp collection without disturbance, announced he would build a villa on

Monte Cristo and use it as a pleasure hideaway.

"Allow us to warn His Majesty," one newspaper editorialized, "that an ancient curse is supposed to be on that piece of land. Nobody can explain how it started, but Monte Cristo is known as the island that hates people."

Reaking the same misadventure, Victor Emmanuel went ahead and constructed a beautiful villa. Then his luck turned. War broke out, and Italy sunk in defeat. The King abdicated and fled to Egypt where he died in exile.

Then another band of pirates, mostly hungry fishermen, raided Monte Cristo, demolished the royal villa and made off with floorboards, building stones, doors, windows and everything else.

And so came my turn to rub shoulders with the ghost of Edward Dumas. Having thrown all superstition to the Mediterranean winds, I was eager to see whether the bad-luck, stubborn satellite of the sea was really the "island that hates people."

At first sight, Monte Cristo gave the impression of being a paradise. Its beach looked like a set of white teeth. The place was riddled with an underground and permeated with native cabbage palm. In the centre of the island was a spring of fresh water which flowed down to a cove.

Nevertheless, by mid-afternoon the next day I had had my fill. Either Robinson Crusoe could keep his sea-pet Shango-La life with my compliments. I looked forward to a nice shower, a plate of Fetturini alla Bolognaise, a Florentine steak and a bottle of Chianti to make it legal.

(Continued on page 68)



CRUISE TO DANGER

Corey didn't like Arnold, but he had to admit that the big man's plan sounded like an easy way to make money. A bit too easy . . .

FICTION / MARK GRAHAM

COREY STRAINED and sweated as he hoisted boxes of fish from the refrigerated hold. He was dressed in blue shorts, nothing else, and his muscles glistened brown under the North Queensland sun.

The wharf at Green Island was lined with curious tourists. They watched Corey at work.

"Red Emperor, mate?" a big man dressed in tropical white quipped. He leaned over the wharf rail and looked at the fish. "Coral trout too. You've got a good catch."

"Yeah," Corey muttered. He lifted the last box on to the wharf,

then he climbed up and started stacking the boxes onto a trolley.

The big man watched him, half grinning. "Helluva way to make a living," he said.

Corey looked up. "The fish is for the hotel. You'll be eating it tonight."

"Yeah," the big man said. He looked towards the cabins and buildings surrounded by waving palms. "You do a job all right. There are a lot of people here."

Corey wheeled the trolley towards the kitchens. He got his cheque from the hotel manager and went straight

to the bar. He was hot and thirsty. He ordered a beer.

"Hello, mate!"

Corey turned. It was the man in white.

"My name is Arnold. Can I buy you a drink?"

Corey frowned. His mind was troubled and he didn't feel like talking to anybody, but he didn't want to insult the big man.

"Okay," he said wearily. "My name's Corey."

They shook hands. Corey noticed the flashy rings on Arnold's fingers. He saw the heavy gold watch. The



guy must be loaded, he thought.

"How's the fishing business?" Arnold asked. He grinned, showing gold-filled teeth.

"Finished!" Corey granted.

"What do you mean?"

"My contract with the hotel's cut out. They're going to buy all their fish from the co-operative in Cairns from now on. So I'm out of business."

"Huh!" Arnold said. His dark eyes narrowed. "You've got a good boat. What are you going to do?"

"I don't know," Corey said dully. He wiped sweat from his brow. Corey was tall and lean, but now his shoulders drooped. The cheque he had wouldn't last long. The Nancy, his boat, was expensive to run. Corey felt as if the world was against him.

"Why don't you get into the tourist racket?" Arnold asked.

"How?"

"Take a load of tourists for a trip to Thursday Island. Even go further. Say Sumba, the Indonesian island."

"Nancy is a fishing boat. It's not fitted out for passengers."

"Make it an adventure thing. Roughing it on the high seas and all that."

Corey stared at Arnold, his mind ticking over.

"I'll tell you what, Corey. I'll help you. I'll be your first passenger. \$100

an advertisement in the Cairns newspaper. Offer them two weeks at 100 bucks each. That'll be cheap."

Corey worked it out. He could carry five passengers in Nancy. That would be \$1000 for a couple of weeks at sea. It was a proposition.

He wondered why Arnold was so interested. He shrugged. He didn't like the big man, but what the hell! He had to do something.

"Okay," he said. "But we can't touch on those Indonesian islands. I need special permits for that."

Corey waited two days in Cairns until he got his full quota of passengers. They came aboard with suitcases and heavy boxes of fishing gear.

The fourth applicant was a girl. Corey wasn't happy about that. "I'm not taking a woman on board," he growled.

"Be a sport, Corey?" Arnold said.

"I'm not taking her!" Corey bit out. "There are no facilities for a woman!"

Arnold scowled. He stared at Corey. They were standing on the wharf. "You'd better phone her at the hotel and tell her she's not acceptable."

"Yeah," Corey said.

A taxi pulled up on the wharf, and a girl of about 24 climbed out.

She was dressed in blue jeans, white boots, bright red bloomers and wore silver rings in her ears. She had even between eyebrows, dark eyes. Her hair was black.

Corey eyed her. "Miss Wilson?" he queried.

"Call me Leone," the girl said, smiling. She heaved a suitcase effortlessly out of the taxi. She untapped a long fishing rod from the roof.

"I'm sorry, but I can't take you."

She spun around, eyes flashing. "Why not?"

"It's too awkward with a woman on board."

"I'm coming!" Leone Wilson snapped. "So you'd better get used to the idea."

"I'm skipper of the boat!"

Leone marched straight up to Corey, eyes flashing. "Now listen, Mr Corey. I've been around. I was brought up on the scrap heap outside of Townsville. They called it the Aboriginal reservation. I've lived with men all my life. I can do anything a man can do. I want to go on this trip. I've got the money. What the hell more do you want?"

Corey looked her up. He had never met a bird like this before. Her honey colored cheeks were tinged with anger, and for a moment he thought she was going to punch him.



"Let her come," Arnold said.
 "Yeah," Walton shouted from the deck rail.

"Be a sport, Corey!" Kerst said.
 "She likes deep sea fishing, that's all," Judson said. "Look at the rod she's got!"

Corey grimaced. He shook his head doubtfully.

"Okay," he said. "But it's going to be a rough trip, Leone. You won't like it."

Leone tossed her head. "We'll see about that!" she said. She picked up her suitcase and swung it aboard.

The men laughed. Leone held the fishing rod high as a sign of victory. Arnold held his hands by his sides and burst out laughing.

Corey jumped aboard and offered to help her with the suitcase. She held it tight, gripping it hard. "Nobody helps me!" she said angrily.

She walked to Arnold and walked below. The men cheered her. Corey flashed. He walked quickly to the wheelhouse. He felt his authority had been taken away, but under the circumstances there was not much he could do about it.

"The Moody bitch!" he muttered.

Corey stood at the wheel and looked anxiously at the sky. Dark clouds gathered in the north. He wondered whether he should turn around and go back to Thursday Island.



"I have a hard time going along with some of these new interpretations of the law."

Arnold walked into the wheelhouse. "Looks like we're in for a storm," he said.

"Yeah," Corey replied. "We shouldn't have come this far."

"Everybody agreed we should go further north than Leone."

"Yeah," Corey growled. He couldn't get used to the girl. She talked and acted like a man. She was the toughest female he had ever met, and tough was hadn't worried her. She spent most of her time fishing at the stern.

"Head for Sumba," Arnold said suddenly.

"I can't. It's an Indonesian island. I told you that."

"You can tell the port authorities we were caught in a storm."

Corey shook his head. Arnold's thick features set hard. He stared at Corey, impatience and anger in his eyes.

"We've been talking," Arnold said. "Everybody wants to go to Sumba. We're close to the island."

"We're not going there. I'm taking the boat back to Thursday Island."

Arnold pursed his lips. "Look, Corey — be a sport. You're overpaid. I'll pay you an extra 100 bucks if you take us to Sumba."

Corey stared at the big man. He didn't like Arnold, and he had no intention of going to Sumba. He shook his head.

Arnold stepped back, his face flushed. He wasn't used to being told no. He gazed at Corey. Then, without a word he stomped below.

A few minutes later Leone came into the wheelhouse. She looked at Corey suspiciously.

"So you're afraid to go to Sumba," she said.

She stood there, hands on hips, dark eyes glowing. Her breasts punched out behind the red blouse.

"I'm not afraid," Corey growled.

Leone came close. She squeezed Corey's arm. She arched her eyebrows and looked up at him seductively. Corey smelt a perfume of musk, and his nostrils twitched.

"Don't be such an idiot!" Leone said.

Corey took his eyes off the compass and looked at her. She leaned forward and kissed him lightly on the cheek. "I could be nice to you," she said, huskily.

"You could be nice to any man," Corey gitted.



The perils of fatherhood

NATED ERNIE SHAKE the responsibility of feeding the egg and bringing up the children.

After the hen had laid a clutch, she leaves the nest and temporarily resumes normal life. The male broods over the eggs for eight weeks, and only leaves the nest for 20 minutes each day to feed.

His "wife" does not bring him anything to eat.

She seems to know when the little ones are hatching for she comes back and resumes motherhood while the first, disconsolate mothered herself off to fill his stomach.

Loone jerked back. Her eyes closed. Then she controlled herself, and laughed.

"You're a bloody idiot, Corey! You haven't got an ounce of brain in your head!"

"Hah!" Corey granted.

"Don't you like me?"

"Not much."

"Why not? Because I'm a half-caste Abe?"

"That's got nothing to do with it."

"Not bloody much!"

Corey bared his lips. There was no disease with this gun. She came straight to the point and didn't beat around the bush. She must have had a hard life, Corey thought.

"Let's go to Samba," Loone said seductively. "It's worth 200 dollars extra and I'll be nice to you."

"No."

Loone stepped back angrily. "You're a bloody idiot, Corey."

"You said that before."

She spun on her heels and walked quickly out of the wheelhouse. Corey watched her go, his mind working.

Storm clouds swept the sky, and rain started to fall. Corey sat alone for Thursday Island Nancy ploughed lazily through heavy seas.

Suddenly Arnold stepped into the wheelhouse. His face was like granite. He held an automatic pistol in his fist.

"Okay, Corey. Talk has finished. You head for Samba or else I'll put a bullet in you."

Corey gritted his teeth. He knew something like this would happen. He spun the wheel, and the Nancy rolled dangerously.

"What are you going to do, Arnold?"

"None of your business."

Corey nodded. He didn't expect Arnold to tell him anything. He checked his watch. They would be in Samba in a few hours.

Time passed. Arnold relaxed, staring out through the rain-splashed window. Corey waited, watched

Arnold from the corner of his eyes. He had no intention of letting the big man get away with this.

Suddenly Corey spun the wheel. The Nancy heaved and skidded on a huge wave, and Arnold staggered back against the door.

Corey dived at him. He hit him on the jaw with a right cross, then a straight left to the head which knocked Arnold out cold.

Corey snatched up the pistol from the deck and examined it quickly. It was loaded. He lashed the wheel and ran down the steps to the cabin.

Johnson sat on his bunk, reading. He looked up at Corey. Johnson was having a shave, and Kent sat at the table watching fishing line on to a reel.

They all stared at the gun in Corey's hand.

"Where's Loone?" Corey burst out.

"She's up forward in her cabin," Kent said.

"What's happened?"

"Arnold tried to force me to go to Samba. He threatened me with this gun. Loone's involved with him."

Kent stood up. He walked over to Corey, holding onto the table with one hand on the boat rolled.

"I knew there was something phoney about Arnold," he said slowly. Then, suddenly, he struck out, knocking the gun from Corey's hand.

"What the hell!" Corey cried.

Kent dived for the pistol. He grabbed it, stood up and waved it threateningly. Corey backed away.

"You're in this too," he said bitterly.

"Yeah," Kent replied.

"How about you, Johnson?"

(Continued on page 77)



"I went to a mangrove hell on a transducer radio and on the way home this handsome guy turned me on."

Treasure ships of the west

The first European ship known to have sheltered along the then uncharted Western Australian coastline was the famous Dutch ship, the *Eendracht*, captained by Dirk Hartog. But seven years later, in 1622, the ill-fated British merchant ship, the *Tryal*, came too close and carried its rich cargo to the sea bed.

THE BRITISH merchant ship, *Tryal*, is said to be the first European ship to be sunk close to Australian shores.

When she left Plymouth she had 150 hands to man her and the full cargo in her hold. Included in the cargo were "500 gold rings, and gold spangles to curry favour with the King of Siam"

The *Tryal* sank and broke up after striking a reef off the Monte Bello Islands on May 10, 1622.

Research by Eric Christensen more than three centuries later led him to believe he had located the approximate position of the wreck. But the Monte Bello Islands had been used three times by the British as a nuclear testing site before his study in the mid-1960s, and the area was still radioactive.

In 1969 when the islands were declared "comparatively safe", Christensen and several other divers searched the depths for the wreck.

FACT / PETER HASTINGS



"We sighted the Tryal broken and scattered amongst the coral," Alan Robinson, one of the divers, said. "Enormous anchors were scattered in confusion, with ancient cannon lying in holes on the reef. Some distance away lay four more eroded cannon which marked the grave where the bones of the remainder of the ship lay."

The richest vessel to be wrecked off the West Australian coastline was probably the *Zeydsorp*, which in 1712 was sailing for Batavia in the

Right: Shanderson, Hugh Edwards (left) and Norman Macgregor, returning to camp with relics from the Batavia wreck.

Below, right: Hugh Edwards examines one of a three ton cannon on the ocean bed. It bore the Dutch East India Company's coat of arms and the inscription, Rotterdam 1616.

Below: Wearing white hoods as they cut path up reef another study in the seabed world, divers get to work with hammer and chisel on the hard coral enclosing a pile of coins.



hold was stored an immense amount of bullion in gold and silver, a fortune to reimburse the Dutch East India Company. The Zuytdorp was believed to have been wrecked at the base of a range of high cliffs, about 40 miles north of the Marchion River.

In 1929, a station owner, Tom Pepper, accidentally found several sub-eroded corals when he was out drago-shooting on the coastal cliffs.

He found the corals in a drop-up stream bed at the base of a cliff. Time and the elements had turned the corals green. He sent a few of the strange green things skimming over

expedition from Perth. After first viewing the dangerous looking area where jagged rock held in check the angry army of waves, he returned to camp to continue a plan for recovery work.

Then, when lighting a pressure cooker in a canvas enclosure, the cooker blew up and he was almost burned to death.

"Shrvelled, burnt skin hang down my side, from my shoulder to my ankle," he said. "I never knew pain could be so intense. . . Luckily a strong water level only a few miles away. Anyhow, let's just say I survived. We all returned to Perth

early and he finished up in hospital with broken ribs and internal injuries. And his accident triggered off a chain of disasters.

"Within a week of our arrival four men were injured and out of action. One night it rained as though all hell had let loose, and in the morning we found most of our equipment was ruined. The next night was calm and almost weather. I woke up to find men gnawing into our provisions."

Perhaps the forerunners of those men had lived on the Zuytdorp.

"We had no choice but to move out," said Robinson. "But I made up my mind I'd dive at least once before leaving."

In daylight he managed to dive down onto the Zuytdorp which had lain on the sea bed since 1712.

"I came upon the biggest mountain of bullion I have ever seen in my life," he said, "A mound of silver coral at least 10 feet long, four feet wide and almost as high by on the sea bed — worth millions of dollars."

The Government firmly stated that all the treasure was owned by the Crown. Yet recovery work, which was later effected with the help of a giant gantry implanted in the water, has been far from satisfying, and in 1973 the sea still marks protectively shore wreck homes and much of its treasure.

In 1948 Hugh Edwards personally located the main part of the wrecked Zeeuwijk, which was sunk in 1717 on the sprawling western reef of the Albatross Atoll.

Previously fishermen had sighted ancient cannon inside the reef perimeter, aiming at invisible ships, yet searching divers were never able to locate the main carcass of the Zeeuwijk near the cannons.

Her whereabouts remained a mystery, and Hugh Edwards, disillusioned, eventually gave up looking.

One day, when spearfishing and with no thoughts of wrecks in his mind, he came upon an elephant's tusk in the shade of the shallows.

"The tusk was holed and corroded," he said, "yet it pointed like a signpost to the resting place of the Zeeuwijk."

He located the main wreck not far from where the ship first struck hidden rock in 1717.

In strong sun, the sand had washed a part of the wreck over the reef, carrying some of the guns with it. And sections of the Zeeuwijk are now spread over a mile of ocean-bed. Recovered relics include cannon, pottery, ironwork, glass bottles, and remarkably preserved timber.

(Continued on page 68)

Queen of the Hunter Valley

A BAITCATCHER'S DAUGHTER was destined to become one of Australia's most renowned women.

Molly Morgan — the Queen of the Hunter Valley — was to undergo conviction for crimes and transportation to Botany Bay twice before she could build her street shop — to attain a fortune.

Three married, and three times a mother, Molly found she could still dole out men when in about 1812 she opened an inn at Walls Plains on the site where Maitland flows today.

Cattle-grazers and settlers in the fertile valley were attracted to the Angel Inn, and Molly soon became one of the richest persons in the colony.

Her inn — at one time a club and back shop — was well patronised by the increasing population of colonisers, soldiers and emigrated convicts. Such was her turn in fortune that Walls Plains was better known in the district as Molly Morgan's Plains.

To further her hold over the district, Molly bought up large blocks of river frontage land, and all the area which has since prospered and become the main business centre of Maitland.

Governor Brisbane encouraged her settlement activities by sending out convict gangs to clear her lands.

Molly softened towards these shuddered men, and once when some of them were sentenced to death for stealing apples she went on a wild ride to Sydney where her intercessions saved their lives.

She spent the years before her death at Amell Creek, near Greta, an settlement on a 200 acre farm.

the polling waves before he discovered these with an impact on each day. So he kept the rest of the coasts — dated 1711 — and his finding eventually led to the positioning of the wreck.

But it was not until 1944 that further interest seems to have been shown when a group of Queensland divers organised a search in the spiritual sea where the wreck was thought to lie.

Personal wells buffeted the area — rising mountains against their walls of rock. The sea swept against the tumbled rocks, and diving was dangerous and almost an impossibility. Yet the team of experienced divers managed to locate cannon and anchors, and they recovered two small bronze guns.

In 1967 Alan Robinson led an

And somehow the feeling got into me that the Zuytdorp graveyard was proved, that the bones of that wreck were not meant to be investigated."

Soon afterwards the Admiralty made an inspection of the site and officially stated that the area was too dangerous and recovery was impracticable.

"This made me more determined," said Robinson. "I wanted to prove them wrong, and I managed to organise another expedition in May, 1968. At this time one of our divers was also a medical doctor."

They made camp on a plateau of the 100-foot high wall of rock which stood threatening against the battering waves below.

"We wasted day after day under canvas for the stormy waves to abate slightly. Then our doctor dived too





Revenge sweet & sour

Success in life didn't quell the childhood fear that he was a coward, but the time came when he had to find out . . .

FICTION / J. EDWARD BROWN

HIKE WAS A big Maori in dangerous and a huge angler, sporting a fashionable Afro-haircut. He was the centre of a gang of laughing meat works blokes.

Then this joker, not in the drinking school, accidentally spilled the big Maori's beer. Hike reacted instantly, and violently, with a blow to the stomach which knocked the other joker down.

The bar went momentarily silent, and then the noise resumed at a greater level. The joker who had been knocked down picked himself up slowly and staggered from the bar.

Hike hadn't changed one bit in the years since I had last seen him. We called him Hoke Hike at school, after a famous Maori chief of the last century who ruled the government by cutting down their flagpoles at Russell.

"It shouldn't be allowed," I said loudly in the bar and everybody turned and looked at me. "You big fat steb," I said loudly and clearly.

I wasn't drunk either. Maybe Hike was, he had drunk at least half a dozen 12-ounce beers since I had been at the bar. But nobody was going to shape up to him.

"You'd better get out of here, mate," the barman whispered, leaning across to me.

"I know Hike, he only hits people smaller than himself," I said.

"Why, it's young Lockwood," Hike said softly.

"Hitting somebody smaller than yourself was always your speciality," I said. "Why don't you have a go at me?"

I was bigger then I had been at school, when he had been the terror of the playground. We'd been in the same class at Castleknights primary

school. I remembered him, beating me up, as he beat up everybody, Maori and Pakeha alike. He didn't practice racial discrimination. He bullied everybody.

He had knocked out my front teeth and now I had to wear a partial dental plate. But that wasn't the only disappointment he had caused me.

I used to dream of how I'd revenge myself on Hike, I'd dreamed of standing up to him, and telling him down. But I never had.

Hike finished his glass of beer. Did he look worried? Did he know why I was here? He suddenly laughed and turned away. And that was that. Strange. But I wasn't smaller than him — now.

I walked back to the motel. I was lonely. In some ways I missed Hike. He had his friends. If I hadn't left Castleknights I would probably have been in the freezing works too. Maybe I would have been happier.

But I was having the day off tomorrow. I had bought a fishing line, I'd got some bait from the butcher, and I was going fishing on the mole at the Little Beach. Maybe I was trying to recapture my boyhood, and to revive one day, a day that had plagued me for years, a day in which Hike had figured largely.

The river bar was rough, a big wall jutting across the entrance. There had been a few concrete blocks added to strengthen the mole, but the decking was still in poor condition.

The red painted wreck of an old railway engine, used in mole building operations, still lay on its side at the water's edge, as it had been when I was a boy. And the old iron steamer was still at the end of the mole, the

tip of an arrow. Her bow was forever impressed by a pathade of wooden piles.

She was a ghost ship, the river washing through her accommodation, shell fish and weed clinging to the rusting metal.

There had been a group of Maoris hunting mussels at the Little Beach end of the mole. But there were no big mussels, I'd had a look on the way out to the old steamer.

It was called the Little Beach to differentiate it from the Big Beach which was on the river side of the mole at Castleknights. The Big Beach was dangerous, or comparatively so, because the river swept past at full force on its way to the outer moles and the Tammam Sea beyond.

My younger brother and I weren't allowed on to the Big Beach, we could only climb on to the rock mole and watch the small craft passing on their way to the Town Wharf to load and unload. Sometimes we'd stare down warily at the sea swimmer's club-house accommodated in a grounded lighter which had once been used to carry frozen meat out to the home-boats anchored in the residential. It had been wrecked on the Big Beach and it was surrounded by pumice and driftwood.

If our father was floodwatching with his floris off the Big Beach we were allowed there, and we always ate our share of the floodwaters which were caught, at least I think my brother ate his share, the trouble is, I can hardly remember him at that time.

I mean, I can't even remember him at home, sitting for instance. Actually I can't remember eating myself, but I suppose I must have eaten. And there's certainly a photograph of him in my mother's

photograph album, her in an old-fashioned dress, we two boys in home-made shorts and shirts, bare-footed with floppy grey starched sun hats on our heads. So the photograph proves he was there.

I know the Little Beach was our play area. We were allowed to go there alone, running from home with our towels and toys across the sealed main road, down the gravelled road and then a sharp turn off into the track through the sandhills and lupins, past the big red wool-store and on to the railway line, a scrapper down the sleepers above the green slippy rock retaining wall, bolstered in parts with old railway wagons on their sides, and then a jump down on to the clean sand of the Little Beach where we could swim safely in the harbor basin.

At high tide the water was deep, but for little boys, like my brother and I, it was deep enough when the tide was slithering.

When the tide was out, a man could walk on the river mud from the Little Beach up to the wharf where the bucket dredge worked keeping the basin clear. The father of a boy at school was her captain, and we used to annoy him because of his voyages to sea out through the harbor mouth to dump river mud.

Sometimes we walked out along the mole to the old steamer. Or at least I knew I did, I don't know if my brother ever came with me.

Mostly we swam at the Little Beach, but sometimes we collected prisms, especially after a flood, and we got paid a shilling a paper-bag of the seapewicks a few hundred yards further down the railway line.



"It's such a nice evening, what would you like to do?"

Once, in a big storm which had the river in high flood, a launch was cast up on the beach and made a wonderful plaything until it was hauled back into the water again.

There were always large logs on the beach, drifted too heavy to be easily carried away, and there were always a few floating in the water which could be ridden on.

From the beach we could see the ships tied up at the long wharf. There were small coasters unloading general cargo, the pilot launch, the powerful tug. Big ships carrying phosphates for

the farms inland tied up at the deepest part of the wharf, and then there would be *Charras* or *Hindas* on the basin, or standing outside the tin-roofed *Cattleboughts* shed.

There were a few fishing boats which worked out at sea off the coast, and at anchor towards the Little Beach were a few flaties, my father's among them.

To board the flaties you had to scramble down the sloping rock retaining wall, and then, while father held the flat-bottomed boat against the rocks, you jumped in and sat quietly on the back seat, unless he was tying his flounder net and then the seat was covered by the net and you had to sit up in the bows.

When the tide was high it was always possible to net flounders off the Little Beach, but it wasn't recognized as a fishing beach. We boys fished through the cracks in the wharf at the outfall of the freezing works, and caught fish too, at least I did, I just can't place my brother in the picture.

Sometimes we went over to the "other side" in the flatie, which was the opposite bank of the river. After a walk across low sandhills we would arrive at the ocean beach on the Tasman Sea, a wild place of wind and tangled driftwood and crashing breakers — and gulls, I came back with baskets the size of lunchbox plates from one picnic we had there.

There was an old diesel railway engine on the "other side", used at



"The party has started, Mr Wilson."

one time for taking rocks out to the south mole. Even then everything around Castleshights seemed to be old and broken down, the wharf where we landed on the "other side" was only a few piles and gaging decking.

But the Little Beach was our beach, we went often there, I suppose my brother and I learned to swim there, though our school did have a swimming pool.

Sometimes my father would borrow my uncle's handcart and we'd go down and collect firewood. I don't think anybody in Castleshights then would dream of buying firewood, the river brought down plenty for everybody. My father saved up ours on a petrol engine driven saw-bench he had made.

I do remember my brother in connection with firewood, principally because I hit him over the head with the axe.

I was chopping wood, he was placing the logs on the block, and unfortunately he didn't move back quickly enough and the descending axe caught him on the top of the head. I remember blood and lying in the lavatory.

In this house we had a floating toilet which was different to the other houses we had lived in at Castleshights. When we moved there I thought it was a grand idea because the splash came up and washed your bum, though my mother sometimes commented sadly on the rest in my shorts. My brother was taken to hospital, how I don't remember, and his scalp was stitched.

I used to wash my brother had been old enough to go to the Junction for meat. However I had to go because I had a bicycle, a half-size one.

There were almost no houses on



"I know my wife cheats, but it does help with the bills."

the way until near the Junction, but there was a lightening house near the start of the straight, a long piece of road that seemed to stretch for miles. This house settled in the mainstem grass and lupins, and in the house lived a gang of savage Maori boys led by Hoko.

I think they lived on the rabbits which infested the scrubland, and they ran as fast as rabbits when they chased me. I'm sure they used to be an asset for me. The must have known the days I was sent for meat to the Junction, and they used to rush out at me like angry dogs, shouting and screaming.

I would always run terror-stricken towards their house, pedalling as fast as I could to get past without being spotted, but I was rarely successful.

I hated being sent to the Junction for the meat. And scoring back,

hindered by a parcel of stowing stock and having to cycle up the hill instead of down the hill, was terrifying. They almost caught me several times.

I felt a tug on my fishing line. I flicked it automatically. A white fishing boat headed out to sea, dipping over the swell. I didn't think I'd ever come back to Castleshights, again. Maybe I should never have come this time.

I hadn't got many orders for my posters and my newspaper. It was a back town, they thought. **SAVE WATER. SHOWER WITH A FRIEND.** Posters were in demand. Though I had heard that time moves and wife pumping were the in thing in chic suburbs, I hadn't been able to get an in. Maybe my posters were not hot enough for them.

I had all the conventional pop posters: Cbe, Hendrix, Dylan, Tiny Tim, plus a lot of originals, even a Maori motif, good value at \$1.50.

But my bread comes from my paper. I'm an underground press editor, maybe the closest to the business. As a side line I produced pop posters by silk screen process which helped pay some of the expenses of running the outfit.

I'm a good editor, I think. I didn't drink or smoke, wear a beard and go barefooted. I didn't write meaningless poems, or preach in Esperanto against nuclear holocaust. It was a satirical paper, camp. I even used bad language occasionally when it was necessary for emphasis.

But people said my paper was scumious, full of nonsense, half-truths — though nobody said so. Maybe because I didn't have any

The gouty tree with a sweet scent

NO TWO AUSTRALIAN baobabs are alike. Better known as the bottle tree, these swollen off-springs of Nature store food and water in their trunks to sustain themselves in times of drought.

Some baobabs are graceful with tall, swollen stems, others are stout and gouty-looking. Even when very young, the bottle tree shows its generosity, and as the spangly trunk lengthens it widens too, until it is 25 feet high and 24 feet wide.

Some of the trees are as wide as they are high and each yields many gallons of drinkable water from the base of every branch. The trunk produces a nutritious gummy substance, which is often eaten by Aborigines.

In the spring, the tree cloths themselves with graceful yellow blossoms rather like those of a cactus. The scent of these blossoms is very beautiful — a soft enveloping fragrance that lingers in the air.

The bottle tree grows only in north-western Australia and is regarded by scientists as one of the world's most remarkable trees.

money and the so-called half-murder would become nationally known.

But the police and the *MICH* were often after me, and I had spent nights in prison. It was a lonely life. Nobody loved me for it.

But the other side of the story had to be told. The overground press wouldn't print it, so I had to I suppose it was because I hated bullying. I always took the part of the under-dog. I was a fighter — except here at Castlebrights. That's why I had come back.

This was where it all started. Once, I had been a coward, but in the subsequent years I hadn't been a coward. I had faced up to things, as nobody else had. Nobody had the guts to print what I printed.

Deep-down I had a feeling, and it wasn't vague, that I was a threat, that I was trying to prove something. So I had to get back to the root cause of it all, here at Castlebrights, then I would be free.

The wind was increasing and it was getting cold out on the mole. Time to go. I headed in my line.

I saw somebody coming along the mole, jumping the gaps in the decking. He straddled the gap to the counter stern of the old steamer.

"I've been looking for you all day," Hike said.

"Oh?" I said.

"I used to beat you up at school."

I couldn't deny it.

"I'm gonna beat you up again."

God, he was big, and fit. Had I taken on more than I could handle? Once, I had played rugby. I still



belonged to a club, but all I did now was drink beer on Saturday nights in the club rooms. Perhaps I should have knocked him down in the bar last night when I had the advantage of surprise.

"You made me look a fool last night," Hike said.

"If you want to correct it, in public, I'll be in the bar again tonight," I said.

"I'm going to get you now, Lockwood," he said.

He obviously didn't remember that occasion years ago at the Little Beach. But why should he? He must have figured in many such episodes.

For except for hitting my brother with the axe, the only time I really remember my brother when we were boys was a frightening occasion right here at the Little Beach.

I don't think it was the day there was an eclipse, we had prepared for that by taking smoked pieces of glass, and in the shade of the big red wool-stone we stared up at the sun, and I remember that it grew quite dark. I don't remember being frightened, but when Hike came down to the Little Beach I was frightened.

We were trapped. There was nobody else there. I'd been beaten up in the school playgrounds. Getting beat up at school was normal, but getting beaten up at the Little Beach was not. It shouldn't be allowed. And I didn't have my bicycle to outstrip him.

He started to lash my brother first. My brother had fought him but he wasn't big enough, or strong enough, and Hike held him off easily while he pummelled him.

Then my brother started to yell, and I knew I hesitated. I guess I wasn't very brave. I yelled at Hike to leave him alone, so he turned his attention to me. Before he could grab me I must confess I ran, into the sea. He didn't follow me.

He called me names while I stayed up to my neck in water, well out of his reach. So then he gave my brother a farewell beating and swampered off. I crept out of the sea and we went fearfully home. I was feeling rather ashamed of myself for not defending him properly, even though he wasn't badly or viciously hurt.

I've often thought of what I should have done, I should have stood up to him — then I would probably have been beaten too — but I would never have had to worry about that incident that made me seem a coward. It had nagged at me for years, more than the fact that I can't remember my brother then, except for isolated happenings.



"Say, mister... if you're really interested in 'Man's Best friend'..."

A poison that lingers on

YEARS AGO a man was poisoning rabbits with strychnine and he didn't want to leave the carcasses around as a threat to hungry station dogs.

So he burnt them to ashes on a heap of dry logs.

Later, some thoughtless built a fire on the heap of ashes and baked a dinner. The dinner became poisonous from the ashes and some of the people who ate it died.

So the use of strychnine to kill dogs and other animals is always hazardous. In sleep, to the human being after all flesh has rotted away from a dead heart and retains its deadliness almost indefinitely.

I don't think either of us mentioned the incident to our parents, but the Little Beach wasn't a happy place to go anymore. I was always afraid Hake was going to appear again.

We left Castleblights shortly after that, and I had never been back, until now.

"You haven't learned, have you," I said, gently.

"Don't give me any of that peace brother crap," he said.

"You know what I am now?" I asked cautiously.

"I saw you on television one night."

I wasn't given many opportunities to put across my beliefs in the established media.

He grinned at me, relishing the coming fight. We were on what might have been the promenade deck of the old steamer. The river was gurgling through the hull, slapping against submerged bulkheads. The wind sighed through glassless portholes.

"Is he going to address anything?" I asked.

I was quite calm. I didn't want to fight him. I found physical combat distasteful. But it had to be.

"You always were a coward. You never come out in the open, you sit behind your typewriter sniping at people and things," he said good-nightly. He knew more than I realized.

"The fist is nobler than the word," I said, sadly.

He threw a fist at me. I ducked and almost slipped over. This was one fight I had to win.

"Will you be reporting this in your paper?" he taunted me. He tried to kick me. We wrestled. It was impossible to lose. He had me around the waist and was trying to push me into the dirty water of the river.

I must have expected to fight. But did I want to be beaten? Surely not. Hake had me down on the rusty deck. I suddenly pushed him off and I was on top. I was getting mad. I got him by the hair and started to bang his head on the deck, savagely, once,

two, three. "This is for my brother," I panted.

He grasped me by the neck and hauled me down and tried to crush me. He was strong. Opening a printing press didn't build muscles. But I had been fighting in other ways for years. He couldn't stop me. I broke his grip and continued to pound his head. I'd kill him! I'd kill him! And eventually he was still. It surprised me that I had overcome him. I panted.

And I got scared. Was he dead? No such luck. He was still breathing. I got up from the area deck.

"You killed my brother," I said loudly. "You killed my brother," I shouted at him.

"I never killed your brother," Hake said weakly.

"He was killed in Vietnam, fighting for people like you," I said bitterly. And even more sadly, I said couldn't really remember him. He had never been real to me, except here at the Little Beach.

"I was in Vietnam," Hake said weakly.

That surprised me. It was like another blow. I didn't think he would have had the guts. I certainly didn't have the guts to volunteer. Only my brother had.

"You probably went to Vietnam for the money," I said callously, hitting out at him as the only way I knew I was almost crying.

He didn't deny it. He didn't say anything. I left Hake there on the deck. I didn't feel satisfied as I had hoped. I would be. I didn't feel happy I was gone. I was and I was resentful. Hake shouldn't have gone to Vietnam. It was out of character. He was a coward. I was a coward. My brother was a brave man.

The wind tugged at me as I staggered across the decking on the mole heading back to the Little Beach, or where the Little Beach had been. Everything had changed.

The harbor had stilled up and almost nothing used it, the powerful tug was trapped by sitting in the river at the Town Wharf upstream.

The Junction, which I'd thought was miles away, was exactly one mile from our old home. The house before the start of the straight, which itself was only half a mile long, was still there, but it was only an ordinary neat 1920's California-style wooden bungalow.

The Little Beach was gone. Piles had been driven across its entrance and a new section dredged, nearly trying to remove the port had filled it with sand.

Hake? He hadn't changed. But he had denied me my revenge.



"Resident State aid, Foundation grants, and philanthropic donations, does anyone know how we can raise a few bucks?"

RODS OF THE DEVILS

The Kendall brothers had to find water to save a drought-parched town and farming area. But why were the people so against them trying with their Y-shaped divining branches?

FICTION / HARLAN CLAY

MARK KENDALL winced as they stepped from the hotel onto Long Horn's deserted main street. It wasn't the heat, hell's sample for its future inhabitants, that bothered him. It was because of his younger, devil-may-care brother. Not since their mother died had he seen Jim so sober, and it hurt deep to see his brother's eyes dull and listless with defeat.

"Maybe we should o' left like you wanted to when we still had money enough to buy railroad tickets back home," Jim conceded, though the argument had taken place two weeks before. "If we could sell our well digger' ing we'd still be able to ride out o' town. Now it looks like we'll have to walk."

"We couldn't give it to anybody!" Mark snorted. "Old Mulliner's made it unhealthy to even own the thing." Then he added, "I wouldn't care so much if Deb wasn't loose" what little trade he had left on account o' us."

Mark and Jim stopped in front of the vacant store building, the source of all their troubles. It was as lifeless now as the rest of the parched town. But in the evenings it was filled to overflowing.

"It's more than just personal — his preacher' that our diviner' rods are instruments o' the devil," Mark said sourly.

As Mark spoke, the gaunt, Reverend Eli Mulliner stepped from the building. He shot them a worried glance, started across the street, then changed his mind and went back into the building.

"If he'd keep his mouth shut, we could locate water for these farmers an' farmers," Jim said again for the

hundredth time. "We'd keep from starvin', an' they could hold out till the drought breaks."

Eli Mulliner had preceded Mark and Jim into Long Horn by two weeks, and had opened his so-called revival meetings. But it had not been soul-saving he had preached, rather hellfire and damnation against the use of divining rods. And the zealous preacher had been able to beat most everything in the Bible to suit his nefarious purpose.

His sermon the night before had been on Moses striking the rock to procure water. And to fill the hearts of his fast growing congregation with mortal fear he had used a magic lantern. "Do these men," Eli Mulliner had shouted, "think they come as a second Moses?"

"I'd like to set fire to that shack," Jim chuckled. "They'd find out then what it meant not to have water — except the drinkin' stuff that's shipped in."

"An' we'd swing from a cottonwood for it," Mark pointed out quickly. "You'd better think of a better way."

On the way to Meyer's blacksmith shop they met Reverend Thomas Smith, pastor of Long Horn's one and only established church.

"Good morning, gentlemen," the minister greeted. He had almost stopped. Then seeing the Stone, the town marshal approaching, he hurried on.

"We sure must be in cahoots with the devil," Mark muttered. "One preacher's plumb against us. An' the other one only speaks when he figures someone ain't lookin'."

"You in cahoots with the devil?"



Jim laughed. "If it wasn't for you I'd never be able to keep on the straight an' narrow."

"A man never went to hell for jokes — if they was good ones," Mark hantured good-naturedly. It warmed the cockles of his heart to see Jim shed his gloom — if only for a minute.

Zeb Meyers turned from his jibber-jabs at the two brothers, cringed his sheep. He had known the two driftns back in Iowa, and it was he who had invited them to come to Long Horn to try and relieve the situation after other driftns had produced nothing but dry holes. Now some of the citizens were openly advising him to leave town with Mark and Jim because of his association with them.

After some talk Zeb said, "I still can't figure it out. Everybody was for your count" when I first told about you boys." He shrugged. "Jim

Peterson peck-headed the idee, but nothin' else was in the wind then as to what might be shaper' up."

"You can count 'em out," Mark said. "If this drought hangs on long enough it'll dry the range up completely. Long Horn will be a ghost town after the ranchers an' homesteaders pull out. Then his bank will go on the rocks."

That night the two driftns pecked their dry packs. In the morning they would store their rig with Zeb, sell their horses, and go as far east as their money would permit.

"It's sure hell to pull our freight without a good fight," Jim said as he crawled into bed. "But like you say, we can't get any right to make Zeb take our beam'."

It was still dark when Mark grabbed his carbine from beside his bed. "Hold it!" he barked at the figure past way through the window.

"I do not count as a thief in the night," came the soft answer.

"Farnon Smith," Smith said, surprised as he struck a match.

"Quick," the minister said. "Draw the shades."

Jim blinked awfully.

Smith moved closer. "This is confidential."

"Both Mark and Jim nodded.

"Mr. Mullins is a former minister of my church," Smith began. "I wrote to the bishop asking if he knew anything about the men. The bishop said that somehow all of a sudden, and without any explanation, handed in his credentials. Then he disappeared from his charge without leaving any forwarding address. This all happened just a short time before you men came to Long Horn."

The minister shook his head sadly. "There's more behind all this than meets the eye."



"We'll expose that corrupt preacher!" Jim said jumping up and shaking his fist.

"Bear wait and see if there are any more fish in the stream," Smith hastened to say. Then motioning for them to extinguish the light he closed the ash and disappeared into the night.

"Of all things to back!" Jim asserted. "A crooked preacher?"

"Better get busy with our hands," Mark reasoned. "Somewhere we're either going to make — or break."

A dozen plans were thought of and discarded. Then came one which they decided to try.

"That's how we'll do it," Mark said. "Soon's it's daylight we'll start out with a dozen rods. An' no matter where they dig we'll start digging! If we strike water we've got the drunk talked!"

Jim motioned his lips with the tip of his tongue. The tower of a light was in the offing.

Hardly had daylight opened upon Long Horn when Mark and Jim left the hotel.

"You start from the east side o' town, an' I'll start from the west," Mark said.

Jim shook his head. "Better stick together. If they'd jump you fast I'd miss all the fun."

"OK," Mark agreed with a grin, knowing that Jim would soon an angel at the devil if given the slightest excuse.

Cutting V branches about two feet long from the elm, the drinkers started out. By nine o'clock, sweat was pouring from their faces. And their tempers were beginning to rage.

US WEAPONS
SCHOOL
REORGANIZATION
DIVISION



"What do you mean, you don't want to get involved?
Is it going to rain or isn't it?"

at the young group that trailed along, harping snafus and threats at them.

"Don't pay any attention to them," Mark said under his breath as he caught the warning signal of Jim's knottling jaw muscles.

Jim kept his eyes straight ahead. "But too much is enough," he muttered.

One of the followers tossed a bucketful of water in front of Jim. "Look at that," he scolded. "Their old drinking rods won't even twiddle when it's got water right under it." Others took up the idea and splashed upon it.

"Ride 'em out o' town on a rail,"

A young aspirant shouted.

"Or a necktie party," put in another.

Suddenly the talk stopped — like magnets when an eagle swoops low.

"Here comes Mulltner," Mark warned. "Get set. But keep your shirt on."

Rowland Eli Mulltner stopped his lips a thin, quivering line. "So," he accused, "the children of the devil have finally come out onto the open."

"Well, brother," Jim retorted, "if you know of a better way than these rods, start talkin'! If not, then go on home an' turn the old man's hooch for him." A couple of guffaws came from the town drunk.

Eli Mulltner quickly withdrew, and those who had been pestering Mark and Jim also left. There were mutterings — unreliable to the drunks, but ominous.

"He shortened our time by showin' up," Mark said.

Jim agreed with a quick, oblique glance.

But Mulltner wasn't through. Within an hour he had contacted every property owner, and strongly advised them to refuse the drunks permission to cross their premises. That left only the streets and alleys to be covered.

At midnight the town marshal accosted them. "You folks better quit," Ike Stone warned. "Even if your old sticks did say there was water under the streets I wouldn't let you dig. It would start more trouble than I could handle."

"If we find a vein we're home!" Jim said stubbornly.

That night Mark and Jim faced



"I warned you about marrying a hot-blooded Latin!"

gram from "We've covered half of the town," Mark said. "That's 10 times more ground than we've ever worked before without findin' water."

Jim nodded. Then he said, "Let's go down an' listen to old Maltiner. It'll be better than sittin' up here and waitin' sorry for ourselves."

The Reverend Ed Maltiner was waiting here on the same subject as Mark and Jim crept up to an open window. Shortly another figure slipped up in the dark — it was Smith.

For an hour and a half Maltiner preached, even condemning to an eternal hell those who stood by and permitted such to go on. Then he wound up with an impassioned prayer that water should come at the natural way.

Heads were bowed in the hot, stuffy room. But outside, Smith and Mark and Jim were staring out.

Mark wagged his head. "I can't figure them out. Human beings that's supposed to be intelligent, an' yet they're beat'ed like sheep to slaughter."

Jim started to crawl in the window. "I'm givin' to expose that rascaldog an' right now."

Smith grabbed Jim. "Let an evil thing run its course," Smith replied slyly. "In due time the light will shine — even to the point of being dawning."

"To take to get one punch at his jaw," Jim said grimly. "He'd see some stars that would be plenty dawning."

* * *

With the sun, Mark and Jim were munching up and down main street. Sudden doom appeared at the window, watched and waited.

Suddenly Jim stopped. "I feel it," he exclaimed. He took two steps forward, and the Y dipped violently. "Jumpus! Jumpus!" Mark echoed.

"An' right in front of that old fiker's place!"



"Oo-ee!"

Ed Maltiner's face disappeared from the window, then he opened the door and fled.

"We're drinkin'," Mark informed the ex-preacher — and bluntly. "An' may the good Lord help those who got other ideas."

Ed Maltiner strode past the men, halted midway across the street, then harned on across to the bank.

Within an hour the rig was set up, and the horses hitched to the power sweep. But for a time the sugar only scratched and chattered on the hard surface of the street. Then gradually the cutting edges began to bite in. By noon it had bored down four feet.

Marshal Stone tapped Mark on the shoulder. "You've gone far enough."

"Not to stinks water," Mark retorted.

"I'll toss you in jail for destroyin' a public thoroughfare," Stone threatened.

"If we don't find water we'll fill it in," Jim said coming to his brother's assistance. "If we stinks it we'll donate the well to the city." Then he added, "You look like you need a bath, you dinged hairy coonster."

By midnight the hole was 30 feet deep.

* * *

Jim bounded from bed as a distant pounding reached his ears. He harned, then moved crossly across the floor to the window. With a muttered snarl he grabbed his carbine and leapt his sights on the solitary figure wielding a sledge on the street.

As the report echoed down the street a man yelled, grabbed at his knees and disappeared between the buildings.

"Dang it," Jim grunted. "I just winged him."

Mark and Jim made it to their rig in almost no time flat.

"I guess that took us," Jim said dazedly as they surveyed the damage done by the sledge swinger. "There's not a chance to get it fixed."

"We'll see," Mark said somewhat hopefully. "Zeb ain't no beginner."

The backswimmer lay down as he was routed from bed. Then grabbing a

A backswimmer from the land

IN MANY SUN-FILTERED CREEKS, ponds and dams in the west, a type of insect can be seen swimming readily on its back across the top film of water.

Strangely, this well-adapted water insect — the backswimmer — once lived on the land.

Its body is similar to other bugs, but its front legs are reduced in size and the hind legs, instead of being long and thin, are flattened and fringed with hairs to form paddles. Its sleek body enables it to dart quickly after its prey.

The backswimmer spends most of its time in water, but it has to draw its oxygen supply from the air. It does this by trapping a bubble of air beneath its wings when it dives. Additional air is caught in a central ridge — or comb — of hair on the insect's underbody.

laurels he and the drillers headed for the rig.

"I'm getting tired o' the way this Mulliner is gotten folks riled up," Zeb said. "There ain't no reason for it."

Mark opened his mouth to tell that Mulliner was sitting under false colors. Then he remembered his promise to Sarah.

After a hasty examination Zeb said, "I can fix it. Get your team at drag it down to the shop."

Two lanterns and a forge made an eerie light for the men to work by. But dawn found the drill back in place, and the boring in progress.

Later that morning Mark said, "Seen how Mulliner is limpin'?"

Jim nodded. "I must o' just ticked

Mark returned to the rig, fiddled around for a moment, then left. But instead of going to the hotel he attached to the shadows between two buildings with his carbine across his knees. If the gun who was punning for trouble showed up he was sure going to accommodate him by being plenty handy.

The night passed quickly enough. And at daybreak Mark was drilling. All through the morning, as the sun rose higher and hotter, he became aware of a mounting tension among those who watched.

At noon a stranger appeared. He was a thickset, loose-lipped individual. And his thumped-down gun marked him for the sensory profession he followed.

The news of the impending encounter spread like wildfire. And from then on Mark was given a wide berth by everybody. Stepping straw bullets wasn't a healthy occupation.

Mark kept on drilling. With the hole close to 50 feet deep he didn't mind to stop. Anyway his drumming rod had never failed, and he was going to show the people of Long Horn that he was right. Along with that was Zeb's ready carbine across the street which was awfully comforting.

Two more wagon full of dirt came up. Then suddenly Mark scooped up a handful. "It could be a fast vein!" he cried. "Maybe we'll have water."

Without warning a revolver barked from between the buildings dropping the off horse in its tracks. From across the street a carbine answered. Three shots cracked the air as quickly as the hammer of a Winchester could rise and fall.

"Of all the dirty skunks!" Mark muttered as he ran to his fallen horse. "Taken on a defenseless animal."

"Come on," Zeb shouted as he moved across the street. "I didn't get the guy that did the shooting, but I winged the one with him."

Mark forgot about the horse. Picking up his carbine he set out after the blacksmith. Despite his balk Zeb was fast on his feet, and Mark had some difficulty in keeping up with him. They covered the length of the short alley, turned at the depot, then sprinted towards the stock yards.

"He's in there somewhere!" Zeb yelled and darted in among some stock cars. He ducked as a bullet splintered into the wood above his head. Then diving out the other side he moved along the tracks. He stopped, fired at a flicking form then disappeared.

For what seemed an eternity Mark hunted — waited — swore. Suddenly a man dropped from between two cars and showed a Colt into Mark's back.

"We're through playin' tag," growled a voice from behind.

Mark let his carbine clatter to the ground. "What's this drifin' to you?" Mark demanded as he turned slowly around.

"Notin' personal," the gunman replied. "But Jim Peterson says you see nobody else is to find water in these parts. Everyone a bankrupt farmer pulls out Jim can buy his place for a song. Jim's got money enough to hold out till a rain again."

(Continued on page 80)

The Tartars of Lambing Flat

THE UNFORTUNATE CHINESE who worked gold diggings at Lambing Flat in the 1880's were denigrated as heathen Tartars who sought white women at their wiles.

The Chinese immigrants worked so industriously that many of the white men on the diggings soon learned to envy their ability. Anger grew faster towards the men who were quickly being labled — "yellow heathens", "thieves", and "cannons of disease".

In 1893, European miners drove 500 Chinese from the mines they had been working, and in a second attack later in the year, expels — hanging from roughly made ladders — were hove high by triumphant whites.

The fury of the Europeans was at its height in June, 1891, when the constabulary in the district was reduced to 25 men. The Miner's Protection League attacked the Chinese, drove them from their claims, looted their property, and set fire to their tents.

Local police, and military and naval reinforcements were sent to protect the Chinese, and by mid-July all was calm again. The unfortunate Chinese returned to take up their spades and open their stores.

him." After a space he said, "We'd better stand guard tonight."

Mark Kendall stood a peaceful watch until Jim relieved him at midnight. But hardly had he reached the hotel when he heard a Colt's angry snarl.

Mark found his brother slumped beside the drill; the side of his head bashed in deep crimson. Quickly gathering Jim into his arms Mark dashed to the physician's office.

"Doc," Mark asked hoarsely, "will he live?"

After a hasty examination Dr. Carter said, "It's not serious." Then squinting up at Mark he said, "Do you suppose Mulliner did it?"

Mark hesitated. "I doubt it," he finally said. "I'd hate to think that o' my preacher — even a bad one."

After Jim had been placed in bed Dr. Carter said, "I'm going to keep Jim under cover, and put out the word that he's dead. You say the same thing."

"That's how it looks," Mark told Zeb some time later, "trouble ahead — maybe death."

"You keep on drillin'," Zeb said. "I'm plantin' myself in an upstairs window across the street. An' I don't miss it at that distance."

While Mark was at work the few men who were watching suddenly disappeared. He wondered, and looked up Mulliner and the gunman were standing beside him.

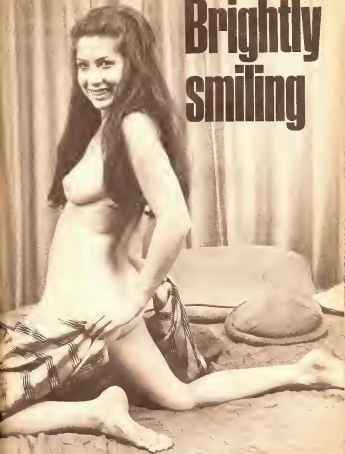
"We'll give you \$1000 for your machine," Mulliner offered. "Let it sit, and get out of town as quickly as you can with your brother."

"You know Jim's dead," Mark said bitterly. "I'm dyin' to smash this wall, an' be present at your hangin'."

Mulliner's eyes sought Mark's. He held them for a hard moment, then quivered. Turning abruptly he stalked back into the building.

"You've had your warning," he said. "Better do as the parson says or you an' we'll tangle."

**Brightly
smiling**





Brightly smiling



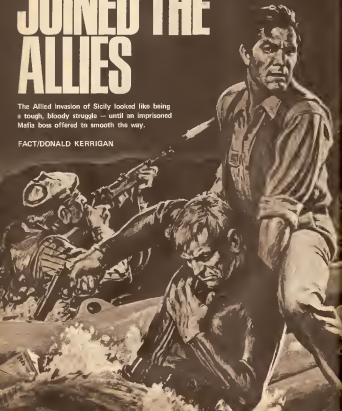
Imagine that some white slaver
After crossing white-lipped waves,
Arrived at the tents of a desert prince,
With this dark-haired, young slave.

Satin sheets would be her destiny
In a brightly curtained room,
Her smile would forbid unhappiness
And forever banish the gloom.

WHEN THE MAFIA JOINED THE ALLIES

The Allied invasion of Sicily looked like being a tough, bloody struggle — until an imprisoned Mafia boss offered to smooth the way.

FACT/DONALD KERRIGAN





IT WAS NEARLY midnight on May 13, 1943, when the two Italian-American officers pushed away the side of the Royal Navy submarine which had carried them across the Mediterranean to the hostile coast of Sicily.

Captain Larry G. Bertolo and Lieutenant Frank Scott paddled cautiously toward the dark cliffs aware that their secret mission could easily affect the coming Allied invasion of the island.

Suddenly Bertolo pointed at a

light flashing near sea-level. "Our welcoming committee," he whispered.

They brought the dinghy into the rocks, guided by the flashes. Three dark figures stepped out of the shadows to meet them.

"Take it easy," Scott whispered to Bertolo. If Bertolo answered, Scott never heard him because then the shots came, from the night high overhead.

Bertolo was hit almost as soon as the firing began. The tall, fair-haired

co-olings professor pitched over into where the three Spilians, two men and a girl, had been hiding.

There was blood all over the girl's shirt front and skirt. She was holding Bertolo in her lap. The gunfire continued to pour in and the two men frayed the ground, ignoring the wounded American officer.

"How bad is it?" the girl asked Franco Scott.

"He'll make it," he had

"That's good," the girl said.

Bertolo had almost no heartbeat.



"Thirty dollars or thirty days in a hotbed!"

and no detectable pulse whatever. His eyes were already staring off into space, glazed over. Scotti was still tying up the wound when Bertolo died.

That left Scotti alone. "Listen," he said to one of the Sicilians. "Is there any way of getting somebody out there behind them?"

"Too dangerous," was the reply.

"Listen, you try to hold their fire on you down here, and I'll try to get behind them," Scotti said.

As he crawled out into the night, he realized that without him, the Sicilians could hope to slip away, or else make their own bargain with the carabinieri, perhaps even get a bullet into his back and claim a reward. But the covering fire began within a few moments. He found out later that it was the girl, acting on her own initiative, against the advice of the others.

The fire coming on as there had been concentrated from a spot on the roadway above. Working his way behind the road, Scotti saw two men firing from the road, while three others sat around the fire, drinking coffee.

There were three stacked weapons put at the edge of the firelight. Scotti took a deep breath and stepped between the weapons and the men.

One of them swung around with his rifle, and Scotti put a .45 slug

into him. The other armed man threw his rifle away as if it had just bit him.

When the two men and the girl came up from below, they viewed the four men standing with arms raised, and Scotti covering them with the .45. "No good," one of the men said. "Got rid of them."

"These men are prisoners," Scotti said. "We'll take them with us."

"No good," the Sicilian said again. Eventually they left the prisoners for safe keeping at a house recommended by Scotti's guides. The four carabinieri didn't survive the night.

"I can't deal with these guys - I

hate the bastards," had been Franco Scotti's response, when they took him out of the field in North Africa and told him he was going into Sicily to work with the Mafia there as a legitimate underground organization. As an escape, who had specialized in mobilizing the forces of the Italo-American community in a large western city against the spread of organized crime, Scotti found the whole thing a bad deal.

"It could save thousands of American lives," he was told in return. "Who do you want us to send in? One of their own?"

"Why should you believe anything they tell you?" Scotti countered.

But the full answer to that question was not to be had until long after the war. As first hinted at in the findings of the Senate Crime Commission under Senator Estes Kefauver, the facts were that longtime American criminal syndicate boss, Sicilian-born Salvatore "Lucky" Luciano, sent to prison on a 30-year white slave conviction, wanted to trade off Mafia co-operation with the coming American uranium troops, for his own freedom.

At the time, it was as hard for American intelligence authorities to believe the possibility as it was for Scotti himself. But the syndicate within Sicily had asked for the sending of American representatives, to demonstrate good faith, and had asked their own offer with the traditional sign of authority - a yellow silk handkerchief bearing the initial of the reigning boss of the time - Don Calisto Tanzi. "If you don't go," Scotti was told, "the politicians have been talking to this guy Genovese..."

"Genovese - if they let Genovese go on the deal, and there's anything to it, then they've handed the island over to these bastards for the next 10 years," Scotti said. Vito Genovese of

Australian golf's long history

SOME SCOFFERS have called golf the recreation of a good dry's walk. However, golf historians state that the game began in Australia in 1847, and flourished until the gold rush temporarily drove all else from players' thoughts.

The first game has been reported to have been played with feather golf balls and clubs on Melbourne's Flagstaff Hill after its introduction into Australia by a Scot, the Honourable James Colquhoun.

When the game began in Adelaide in 1869, 20 club members played in knock-out matches, red coats and red team scarves. Haul marks left by grazing cattle on the mound's new greens, caused the club to sleep on grass hills.

In 1882, a group of Sydney men formed the Australian Golf Club, and its members played on a crude course near Centennial Park.



that time was a small time underworld power, how to rise to important stature in the US Scotti knew him from a previous reason.

"OK, I'll do it," Scotti said, "but you're got to promise to keep the underworld guys out while I'm in there, or the deal's off."

Don Calogero Vicini, whom Scotti met him, was a man of about 60, of middle height, with sloping powerful shoulders, an enormous paunch, and a head which seemed to stare up at him from someplace on his chest, without any intervening neck at all. The stare alone, cold, stoic and indifferent, would have identified him for what he was, the supreme Mafia boss of Sicily in his time. And yet, Don Calogero could have looked like any other small town Sicilian politician, dressed in shirtwaist, suspenders, unpressed pants.

It had taken days of travel across hard, stony, unforgiving territory to get to this monastery, yet Don Calogero seemed in no hurry to talk. "Listen, you people wanted me here," Scotti said. "Now let's make our arrangements and get this thing settled."

"Sit down, take a rest, drink some wine, meet people," was all Don Calogero would say. "There's always plenty of time in the country."

"If this deal doesn't go through right, it's not going to go through," Scotti said.

There was something about the whole situation that didn't smell right to him. For three days, an "man of respect" drifted in and out of the monastery, said non-committal things, listened to Don Calogero and read Scotti up, the feeling grew on him that Don Calogero had something in mind that had not yet been mentioned.

It was after the funeral of the clan Bertoldo that the first explosion came. Scotti was outside the monastery grounds, taking a walk, smoking a cigarette and glad to get away to himself, when somebody crashed into him from behind, knocking him off his feet. Almost simultaneously, the blast of a shotgun sounded, and a thick wad of pellets, not yet spread

apart, travelled over his head. Scotti shuddered as he felt the whizz of their near miss.

Footsteps broke through the brush, running away. His 45 now in his hand, Scotti looked up to see the grinning face of a boy of about 15.

"Don't bother getting excited," the boy said, noticing Scotti's readiness to go out into the woods. "Don Calogero will take care of him."

"Then what was he doing here in the first place?" Scotti snapped. The boy shrugged.

Scotti lit a cigarette, found his fingers had trouble lighting it. He cursed and calmed down.

"How come you were here?" he asked the boy. "Did Don Calo tell you to keep an eye on me?"

"Maybe," the boy said, grinning.

again. "You're lucky I was here. Another couple of inches, and —" He drew his fingers across his neck and laughed.

The boy's name was Renato. From then on Scotti noticed that he was never far away.

But the boy would say nothing. Scotti learned more from the girl, Filomena, who had been in the party of three that met him on the night of his first landing.

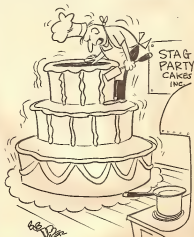
She was not a Sicilian, but a northern Italian, she said. She had come here with her lover, an engineer who had been sent on a government project, and had lost his life. She didn't say how.

Scotti had not attempted any direct advances. But she spoke to him more freely than anyone else in the monastery.

"Don Calo doesn't have all that much power, does he?" Scotti asked her. "If he did, there wouldn't be people with the nerve to try to kill me."

"He has the power," the girl said. "There is no one more powerful than Don Calogero. But there are men who try to challenge him, yes."

"And that's why I'm here, isn't it?"



"Alfred, stop sampling the filling!"

That's Don Calo's end of the deal. He wants to use the American forces to build up his own power on the island."

The girl didn't answer him, but Scott could draw his own conclusions. He was in the middle of a power play between the younger and older members of the hooded society, and Don Calo was trying to draw the entire weight and authority of the American Government into the battle.

The betrayal the night of the landing, the tipoff to the mobsters to wait in ambush — that might have come from one of the syndicate's own. The shotgun blast — He kept hearing the name of a certain Natalie, a freemason, a young beauty who wanted to set herself up as king of Don Calo's racket. Yet Don Calo didn't want to kill him outright, things did not work that way. "Yes, I knew Natalie," Holomona admitted once. "I stayed with him for several months."

"Why aren't you with him now?"

"Now I am with Don Calogero. And Don Calogero wants me to stay with you."

The night Scott joined the whole thing together, the girl stayed with him all night for the first time. It was not right for a girl in Sicily to stay



"Why don't we have a boat?"

with a man, Scott knew. Even a northern girl, as Sicily, would have to act like a gamin, even if she did not feel like one. There had to be some kind of motive behind it.

But she had large breasts, and there was nothing between them and the thin fabric of her blouse as she pressed her trunk against him. Her legs were long and slender, her body simple and surprisingly masculine.

"Look, you don't have to do this," Scott tried to say. "No matter what Don Calo told you."

Her answer came in a half-moon, half-whisper. "No no, I want you, I want you. Do I have to say it?"

Scott came out of a deep sleep. There was a pistol inches from his face, and the red-faced, red-haired

man holding the pistol was kicking him awake.

"Come on, come on," the man was saying. "We haven't got all night."

"Don't hurt him," he heard the girl say. "I thought you just wanted to talk to him."

"Talk to him? We'll talk to him?" It was a kidnapping, Scott knew, with possibly his own murder at the end of it.

Then as suddenly as it started, it ended. There were shots outside, while Scott was being hustled out. The man with the pistol aimed it to Scott's head, and it missed. Scott leaped with the same motion, but the man broke free, got outside.

"That was Natalie," Scott said to the girl, a statement not a question.

"I do what I'm told," the girl said. "I'm sorry."

"All right, all right," Scott said. He went outside. Don Ferro, an assistant to Don Calogero, was supervising a search that wasn't going to turn up anybody. Natalie had got away.

"Sorry for the inconvenience," Don Ferro said politely. "Some of these young men are pigs. They have no manners."

"It's all right," Scott said. "What does he have against me, that Natalie?"

Don Ferro looked surprised that Scott knew the assistant's name, but then recovered quickly. "Who knows?" he said smoothly. "Sometimes men get over-excited." Then he added, "Ah, the girl, you'd better send her back to Don Calogero with me."

But Scott kept the girl with him. He couldn't say exactly why, himself. Except, maybe, that he hadn't been with a woman in a long time, before this.

As part of his bargain with Don Calo, Scott went out into the hills to give military training to men he said were going to form the vanguard of his "liberation army." They were a ragged bunch, thin, scrawny and weak, every now and then a healthy



"How long did you say you've been in training?"

Gippsland's giant earthworms

THE GIANT EARTHWORM found in South Gippsland, Victoria, is an extraordinary creature.

It grows to 12 feet in length, several inches in width, and if its head is cut off, a new one will grow.

Earthwormers know when they are close to a colony of these creatures as loud gurgling noises seem to come up through the ground near their feet. The worms make these gurgling and sucking sounds as it moves through its burrow.

Sometimes known as barling worms, these creatures have attracted wide interest.

One scientist cut one of the giant worms into a dozen pieces and each section developed into a complete worm. If several are cut up two weeks might pass with a tail between, or two might join about a foot.

farmboy would show up for training, but he would seldom stay long. It was late spring, and whatever work was going to be available on the island, was available now or never.

Scotti knew Don Calo meant these men for personal power, not for anything connected with the war effort, and he was a little surprised to find that the men themselves thought they were part of a movement that was going to make Sicily a separate country, or somehow put it under the protection of another country "after the war's over". But he turned them away—he and Don Calo had made a bargain, and he was going to keep his end of it.

Meanwhile, something like friendship—or mutual respect—developed between the American and the Mafia boss. Don Calo never tired of hearing about crime in America, which Scotti narrated without bothering to mention his special vantage point as a police officer, and the more he heard, the less Don Calo liked it. It wasn't right for a man of respect to be engaged in prostitution, dope smuggling and outright robbery of the poor, by the lights of the old Sicilian organization.

Scotti began to get some idea of the challenge Don Calo was already faced with in his own domain, young men growing up on the international model of crime, unwilling to tolerate the old-fashioned values of the simple protection racket, extortion and rough disciplinary justice system Don Calo had been running.

In all this time, Scotti only had to intervene once, when a farmer named Magiotto refused to pay his protection taxes and was marked for extinction. Don Calo grumbled, but since Scotti had heard about it in time, the Magiotto murder never came off.

"What difference does any of these people make to you?" Don

Calogero asked them, with a kind of humorless grin.

"It doesn't matter what difference," Scotti said. "I have my job to do. If any of these people are talked when the Americans arrive, I'll see to it that you're personally held responsible."

"What makes you think you'll be here yourself?" the old man said, as if he'd been talking about the weather.

"I'll be here," Scotti told him. "Don't worry, I'll be here."

One did not give orders to a Mafia boss in his own country, Scotti told himself. But for the first time since his landing, over the next few days, Scotti felt like himself again.

He worked from a list the boy Renzo helped him put together, of men who would be likely to be

eliminated in advance of an American invasion so as to make Don Calo's power more absolute. He was trying to keep the best men in the country alive. Don Calo acknowledged his accuracy, after he looked over the list and accepted it. "The Americans sent the right man."

"Listen," Scotti said. "All other of us wants it to make it easier for people around here, when the war comes."

"Your people, they're Sicilian by birth, aren't they?" Don Calogero suddenly asked, out of nowhere.

"My grandparents were," Scotti said. "Years ago."

"Sure," Don Calogero said. "I knew your grandfather, years ago I was just a kid then." For some reason, all this seemed to strike the Mafia boss as a joke, and something like a real smile played around his mouth for a minute. But he didn't bring up the subject again.

But that is not to say that there were not murders in Don Calogero's part of Sicily during those last few weeks before the Allied invasion. Scotti demanded a cooling off between the rival factions of the men of respect, but the normal violence and murder of vendetta went on at its usual rate.

The boy, Renzo, kept score for him. "Luca Sclapio got it last night," he said once, describing a man Scotti had known slightly. "It must have been the Scari family. They've owed it to him since he killed a nephew of theirs 20 years ago."

(Continued on page 74)



ONE NIGHT IN A FOG

How could an attractive girl, alone, in a fog-shrouded house, give him the clues he needed to find his partner?

FICTION / JOHN NAIRN

I REMEMBER staring out of the pub window at the strip of black between road already glistening wetly in the afternoon's dull light, with the odd tongues of mist waiting in from the gleaming swampland beyond. An unsmiling night.

I turned to the counter again. The old bar-keeper gave me back the photograph I had handed him of Harry Tate.

"Sure," he said. "Remember him coming in here well enough, about three weeks ago. Never forget a stranger's face, because not too many come along this way. Young bloke about your age."

I was 27 and I wasn't feeling very young right then. But Harry was only a year or two younger than I was.

"What's the boy done?" he went on. "Robbed a bank?"

"No. We were partners, business partners," I told him. "He just disappeared."

I nearly mentioned that Harry had driven every cent of his own share from our joint, bank account since his disappearance and without a word to me. But I didn't mention this because it wouldn't have helped and I felt the obvious implication was a long way from the truth.

I had known Harry for a long time.

The barman said, "Was just such a day as this — with the fog getting up from the swamps, none as it is now. There's funny things happen in the fog." He pointed to Harry's photograph. I was still holding, and added, "Watched him hop into his car, then head up-hill, south.... It's bad to head south in the fog."

I drank my whiskey and moved to the door.

"You won't head south!" he called.

I nodded then looked anxiously back at the glowing fog fire smouldering steadily in the corner. "Be seeing you," I said.

In the street the fog had already thickened, and pulsating swatches of fog curled around my headlight beams — strangling most of the light.

But so late that a mile I was out of the country town and climbing the dark-green hill, and I told myself that Harry must have driven in this direction too, in just such a fog as this. Even the turn of day — late afternoon — was similar.

The shifting walls of fog fell slowly behind me as I drove on up the steep hill. Low on my left where I knew there was only swamp and deceiving bush the fog lay heavy like a damp, dark cloud, and it was as though I was airborne, climbing a solitary line that hung over some unworlthy, cave of a place.

When I reached the crest of the long hill the late afternoon air was clear for a 100 yards or more. But below me, the black fog had settled in thickly all around, and all I could see was a dimmed sea of murky air.

I braked the car. If I continued on my way now and tried to drive through that fog there was every chance I and my car would crash up in the swamp somewhere.

Then over on my right I saw an amber light. I wondered why I hadn't noticed it before. I climbed out of the car and walked off the road on to the stony side. I parked my way past

clusters of gorse, then past a few stilled garr trees, and I could see a dirt road winding ahead of me.

In the distance, in a half of land, nestled a rambling two-storeyed house. The amber light glowed from its front veranda.

I made my way back to my car and drove it off the road on to the stony verge. Then I sat behind the wheel for a few minutes trying to work logical reasoning into my mind.

I had spent more than a week trying to re-construct Harry Tate's movements. I told myself that Harry was cautious, that he wouldn't have continued down the other side of the hill. He would have viewed the great cloud of dark fog down there, then stopped — just as I had stopped. And if the amber veranda light was on that he would have seen it too.

Harry would very likely have made his way to that house. He would reason that the fog had set in for the night. And he'd hope to find hospitality there in the shape of a bed, if nothing else.

I climbed out of the car and again made my way towards the house. The fog had softened further now, and trailing ghosts of fog closed in on me as I stepped on the hollow veranda.

The barking started. At least two dogs barking in chorus. Yet not the usual bark of dogs — it was the unmistakable baying of hounds, and as I rang the doorbell I half expected a couple of bloodhounds to come tearing into me. The baying continued. Yet the sound came no closer, and I stopped wondering about the dogs, because the front door opened.





"You there's something you seldom hear."

Dennis stood in the doorway. And I'll never forget my first impression of Dennis. She was about 23, a gentle-looking brunette, with deep, captivating brown eyes set in a pale, oval-shaped face. She wore a tight, short skirt, and her brown legs were long and lovely. Her high-peaked breasts thrust boldly against the neat collar of her white blouse.

She smiled, and I felt like butter melting.

"Hello," I said. And I kept staring at her because I couldn't stop myself. "I . . . I got caught in the fog."

"Of course. Come in," she said. There was a husky softness in her voice.

She opened the door wide, for me to enter. I followed her along the lighted hall. Then up the stairs and into a bedroom.

She switched on a wall radiator and the room looked suddenly comfortable, then she turned to me and said, "Make yourself at home."

I sat in a basket chair and watched her close the door. She then moved gracefully to the single bed where she sat on the quilt and smiled at me, a welcoming smile.

I have never felt such a strong desire for a girl so quickly. A weakness came over me and I wondered if I dared hope — if I would ever know this girl more intimately.

She said, "Am I supposed to know you?"

I couldn't grasp the meaning behind her words. I said, "No, I've never been lucky enough to know anyone nearly as lovely as you."

My words came naturally because I wasn't shooting a line, I was merely speaking the simple truth.

She said, "I asked you if I'm supposed to know you because I forget people very quickly. My memory's improving now but only slowly. It's why I'm here under the care of Doctor Frame. It's to do with my memory bank being blocked. I even forgot what happened minutes ago." She smiled and added, "If you'd told me we're lovers I might even have gone along with you."

Such a wonderful thought!

"Except I know there's someone else — somewhere," she went on. "Yet many things I do remember, all

the time, like that a Doctor Frame's house. And what to say to people at times, and to welcome anyone lost in the fog."

There was simple sincerity and truth in her lovely face in every word she spoke.

I took out the photograph of Harry Tate and I moved over to her and rested a hand on her shoulder. Her closeness made me tremble as I showed her the photograph. "Try to recall if you've ever seen this man," I said.

She stared at the photograph, then said, "Yes, I feel sure I have. But when? Ten minutes ago? Ten days ago? It's time that confuses me."

I stared into her face and I wondered if I could detect a slight haziness in her pools of brown eyes. A drug haze? But her lips as a red cupid's bow looked closer, so tantalizingly close. And I was losing her. I kissed her passionately.

At last she said, "I'm Dennis. Somehow I never forgot my name."

"And I'm John," I told her, breathlessly. "And I'll never forget . . . Dennis."

She said, "Is there anything you want . . . ? I mean, to eat?"

I was hungry. But not for food. "No thanks," I said. "Had a good meal in the last pub I was in."

She stood up and moved to the door. Tremulously she said, "Doctor Frame never wants to be disturbed in the evenings. He's always busy with



"Finally got it finished?"

Long pants saved the day

SHORTS TOOK ON is the tropea many years ago but one Mackay cane farmer never mentioned his long pants and his cotton probably saved his life.

One day, accompanied by a youth, he was heading cane with a weapon when he jumped off the vehicle on top of a large fallen trunk. Informed by the report of his heavy boots, the reptile thing a coil round his leg and struck three times in succession — to the horror of the watching boy.

Then the farmer flung the reptile aside and as it came back met it with a heavy stick of cane. He did not realize that the snake had had three tries to get its venom home but its fangs had not penetrated the leathier trouser leg.

But the youth told the story and the farmer became a local hero.

But the south sold the story, and the farmer became a local hero.

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Expect you'd want to be on your way." Her words were tentative, as though she was seeking a well-known piece of consolation. In a similar moment she added, "Refusen's right opposite Doctor Frome wishes you a pleasant journey, but regrets he can't be disturbed."

I watched her leave. Then I stood up at the white ceiling and I searched my brain for answers.

I was certain the protector I had found was Harry's. Instead of trying to sleep he was likely not there at the dressing table using the time to advantage. Recently several unusual orders had come our way and Harry was a first-class draughtsman and engineer. Also he was very thorough. So he'd draw a few of the most

Devise was in the kitchen near the electric stove with her back to the door. She was alone and the mere sight of her made me feel weak at the knees. Reluctantly, I moved on along the hallway.

I looked into each room as I passed. But one door was locked. I knocked on the door and waited. Not a sound came from inside. I knocked again.

There was no response. And I bent down and looked into the keyhole. A key was in the lock on the inside of the door.

More noisy than necessary I walked along the hall to the front door, and I opened the front door. Then closed it again loudly enough to be easily heard.

that hadn't been on. "Thanks anyway... for being concerned. All right, I'll tell you what happened to me."

"I was caught in the fog out there, three weeks back, like you were. It's a perfect set-up, and motorists have been lured into harm for years." He was silent for a few moments then he said, "They'd all get the same treatment from Doctor Frome."

"Where's Frome now?" I said.
"Frome's dead," said Harry.
"Pushed up in the same graveyard as most of his victims. He discovered a drug that brings on amnesia. Brought the memory back to a person recalls only what's happened minutes ago. Then he used hypnosis to implant whatever ideas he chose into his victims."

"And Denise was one of his victims?"

"Yes. You've noticed everything about Denise. Who could help but notice everything about her? But I'm not going to share her with anyone, John. You understand?"

"All right, steady on," I said. "So you're sweet on her, I can understand that."

"Sweet" wouldn't be the word," he said. "She improves every day, now the drug isn't being administered any more. She'll get right in tune."

He smiled weakly and added, "Your coffee was all right, John. I watched you tip it out of your window, same as I did, except mine was drugged."

"What made you suspicious?" I said.

"Don't know Denise maybe, talking like she was reading from a book. Maybe I'm just naturally suspicious. But Frome found out all he could about his victims before the drug took effect. You talk fast when you're looking down the barrel of a gun held by a madman. Then, after that, he could use them any way he wanted - besides taking them for every cent they had in the world."

"And he killed them while they were of no more use. Why not Denise?" I said.

"He had to have a housekeeper."

"Only a housekeeper?"
"Damn you, yes. He was an old man." Angrily he added, "She's never been touched by anyone." Then more quietly he said, "Sorry, John, just that I can't bear to think of any man even going near her."

"Did you kill Frome?" I said.
"His own hounds killed him," he said. "Day after I got here they somehow managed to get loose."

(Continued on page 78)

Relics of HMAS Sydney

THE FIRST HMAS SYDNEY went to the shipbuilders in the late 1920s, but there are still a lot of relics of the ship and her famous adversary, SMS Emden, kept around the city of Sydney.

The most famous of these are the trapped mail which was created at the tip of Bradley's Head a few years ago. This mail, however, is not the one the Sydney carried in the 1914 battle of the Great Islands. It is a trapped letter with a director for the light cruiser's South gun, and was fired later on in World War I.

A less well-known relic is the peak of the Sydney's bow, which was taken from the water when the sea lion broke up. It is mounted on the harbor shore at Milson's Point, in the shadow of the Harbor Bridge.

A collection of other relics of the Sydney-Emden fight is held on Gnarup Island, the Sydney sea coast's headquarters. It includes a flag-socket and a fragment from the Sydney, and the hammer from the bridge of the Emden.

The most prominent relic, however, is the shell-then 4.5-inch gun from the Emden which is mounted behind iron railings at the northeast corner of Hyde Park, Sydney. Hundreds of thousands of people pass it every day, as they enter and leave the city along Oxford Street.

complicated parts ready for when he was back in the factory.

The remainder of his experiences must have followed a similar pattern to my own here, lovely Denise, that room - and a similar bedside knock.

I dipped my finger in the coffee and tasted it. Nothing abnormal. Yet I was determined to take no chances. I climbed out of bed and opened the window. After I threw the slices of toast as far as I could into a cluster of thick bushes I poured the coffee on to the flower bed below.

After a shower, I dressed quickly, packed my small case and went out of the bedroom as though ready to leave.

But instead, I walked quietly along the carpeted passage and looked in each of the bedrooms. There was no one on the top floor. So I made my way downstairs to question the chauffeur Doctor Frome before leaving his house.

I stood there in the listening silence and waited for about a minute. Then I crept soundlessly back to the door which I had found locked. I tried to handle. And the door swung open as I pushed it.

In the room my co-partner, Harry Tate stood and stared at me. I was too surprised to speak for a moment or two, then I said, "Harry - you all right?"

I looked around the room, there were no other doors and there was no one else in the room.

"I'm fine," Harry said. "You'd better get down."

We sat at the polished table opposite each other.

"Hoped you'd just leave and forget about me," he said.

"Why?" I said. "What the hell have I done, man? What's going on?"

He pointed his hand in his hands and stared down at the table. At last he said, "It was the sounds light - if



THE ASIAN CONNECTION

Continued from page 12

"I will give you a goodnight beer on credit," Pham said with a laugh.

"No thanks," Loder replied. "Learned a long time ago that when you've run out of money the way I have tonight, all you can do is run for cover and save your pennies. A 30kyat bar bill would weigh on my mind. Better to regroup clean."

"It's that bad?" Pham asked.

"Well, I don't owe anybody," Loder said, then added as a joke: "Still, it'll eat me to the guts to leave Southeast Asia as the only US Army supply sergeant who didn't get rich!"

Pham opened a bar and showed it across the bar. "I think you should come with me," he said. "There is a man you ought to meet. I've already told him about you, Frank. But I wasn't sure until tonight that the two of you would be able to do business."

Frank Loder had to catch the last army bus back to his base at 2 a.m. It was nearly 3 a.m. when Pham ushered him into Chung Li's ornately furnished office above the casino.

Loder had lived this kind of scene often before and expected to meet a petty black market crook who would offer him a few 100 dollars to set up the theft of a piece of military equipment that could be sold for big money on the civilian market.

The gray-haired, stern-faced Chinese behind the polished mahogany desk looked more like a successful businessman than a thief.

Later, Frank Loder was to learn that Chung Li had formerly been a

lieutenant colonel in the Chinese Nationalist army, deputy commander of an army that had fled south into the Burmese jungles when the Communists took over their homeland in the late forties. In the intervening decades, the Kuomintang force — named after the ruling political party of pre-Red China — had become bandits, narcotics and opium smugglers. Chung was their representative in Bangkok.

"I understand that you have only a few minutes to spare," Chung Li told Loder. "So I will come immediately to the point. On November 28, the American ship Thomas Ekins will dock here to take on military cargo. Among that cargo will be crates of electronic equipment which you have been preparing at the Phawatalok base."

"That's top secret information," said the startled Loder. "How the hell did you learn . . ."

Chung Li waved him to stoppe. "That doesn't matter, Sergeant. And I am not asking you to do anything that could even be faintly considered treasonous to your own country. I simply want you to ship a few special packages into your crates. The total weight of the packages will be a little over 300 pounds. Since civilian customs officials are not permitted to examine such highly classified cargo, the risk will be slight."

Frank Loder paused immediately when he was being asked to smuggle into the United States. "Is it narcotics?" he asked in a flat tone.

Chung Li shrugged. "Of course. If you accept, you will be paid \$50,000. I do not want your doubts now. Consider the matter for another

week. But if you come in with us, I will not permit any change of heart later."

Loder had already made his decision, seconds after Chung admitted that the secret cargo would be narcotics. He settled with suppressed rage all during the long ride back to his base. Although scrupulous in many ways, Loder would never have permitted himself to get involved in the drug trade.

During his second combat tour in Vietnam, the wide use of heroin among US troops had reached its peak. He had seen young GIs, their judgment blurred by narcotics, wandering blank-eyed into ambushes that a close-minded soldier would have spotted easily.

The next morning, Loder went to the base commanding officer and reported the offer Chung Li had made to him. He interpreted that the CO would simply order him to remain on post until he and the equipment he was preparing boarded the Thomas Ekins.

They were fully aware that there was no point in relaying word of the plan to the Thai government, which had never made any real effort to halt the narcotics traffic. Opium poppies were one of the nation's most important cash crops.

"Thank you, Sergeant," the CO said. "Just go on with your work. What you've told me might prove to be very important."

The following afternoon, Loder was summoned to the headquarters building, where he was introduced to Colonel Miles Denham of the CID. The short, stocky military cop had flown up from Saigon that morning. He asked Loder to repeat all the details of Chung Li's offer.

"He said 300 pounds?" Denham asked carefully. "You're sure?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know how much 300 pounds of pure heroin could be sold for in the States, once it was adulterated?"

"No."

"A minimum of \$60 million!" Denham said. "Sergeant Loder, I want you to accept this man's deal, do everything he orders."

Frank Loder winced. "These are very tough guys, colonel. They got used to me and I'm as good as dead."

"Don't worry," Denham assured the non-com. "I'm not planning to set any kind of trap on this side of the ocean. I don't care about Chung Li and his thugs. That's a Thai problem. What I do care about is the Americans who are going to pick up the heroin."

Colonel Denham stepped to a wall



"What have you been telling him about me?"

map and pointed to the area where Thailand, Burma and Laos met, hundreds of miles north of Phnom Penh. "How much do you know about the narcotics trade in Indo-China?" he asked.

"You can buy a deck of heroin anywhere around here," Leder replied. "Easier than picking up a candy bar. What else is there to know?"

"Quite a bit. This area up here is known as the Golden Triangle. For centuries it's been the richest opium growing centre in the world. Turkey and other Middle and Near Eastern countries don't produce a fraction of the raw opium that comes out of these highlands. Since the revolution in China, Chiang Li's Kuomintang friends have dominated the traffic—they have a near-monopoly. Until recently, most of the product has been used in Southeast Asia itself."

Denham primed. "The big change came when our GIs in Vietnam became customers for heroin, morphine and other narcotics refined from opium. All of a sudden the Kuomintang big shots realised they were selling their stuff for peanuts, that the big money market was in the United States."

"Most narcotics sold in America come from European refineries—and sells for at least 30 times the going price in Asia. So the big boss built their own refineries and have turned out tons of narcotics. But so far they haven't set up an effective system for smuggling the stuff into the States. If they ever do, you'll see a tidal wave of it in America. The Mafia will look like small-time narcotics peddlers in comparison."

"The way we figure it, the smart thing to do is smash down hard whenever we spot a big shipment, hit the market before it reaches epidemic proportions. The key isn't here—no one can halt the opium traffic in Asia—but in the States. Someone on the West Coast is going to pick up Chung Li's \$60-million jackpot."

"They're the husbands we want to nail. And it's going to be strictly a military operation. Mean a lot of dumb Press attention about how the Army hasn't really done its best to wipe out the traffic. The top brass wants to show that it's all been beaten. And you can help, Sergeant Leder."

In the end, Frank Leder agreed to the scheme. Colonel Denham assured the non-com that no one would accidentally expose him in Thailand. "You'll follow Chung Li's instructions to the letter," Denham said.

"I'm not even going to tell the base MPs to look the other way when



"I hope you won't feel offended if I don't return your visit."

you begin moving the heroin on to government property. Everything on this side of the Pacific Ocean will go strictly the way Chung wants it."

"And if I get caught with the stuff by our own people?" Leder asked weily.

"We'll fake a court martial and have you shipped back home as a prisoner. Naturally, the charges will be dropped as soon as you're safely out of Indo-China. That way we may be able to plant another agent later."

"I wish you had planted another one already," Leder said.

The following Saturday, Frank Leder again received a weekend pass to Bangkok, where he visited Chung Li's office and told the underworld chief that he would go along with the deal. Minutes later, Chung and his bodyguards took Leder to a waterfront warehouse, where he was forced to finish off the man slowly struggling to death.

Shocked at what he had been compelled to do, Leder returned with Chung to the gangster's apartment above the gambling casino. While his blood-soaked clothing was washed, he showered and then entered the adjoining bedroom to find a young, beautiful girl waiting for him. Mentally to drive the horrifying images of the past home from his mind, he made love to the nameless woman and fell into a deep sleep.

When he awoke, it was mid-morning. His slippers and pressed clothes were draped over a chair. He shaved and dressed, then ate breakfast served by a silent male servant.

After the meal, he was escorted to Chung Li's office.

As usual, the gangster got straight down to business. "It is nearly three weeks before the Thomas Bakins docks in Bangkok, more than enough time to move our cargo on to your base. Your first payment will be deposited in the Merchants Bank of Bangkok on Monday, as you requested. Of course, you will have to sign papers at the bank, under whatever name you choose. One of the vice presidents—a Master Lee—has been told to expect you."

"How do I get the stuff on to the base?" he asked.

"We have worked out a way," said the smiling Chung Li. "My people in Phnom Penh told me that you are somewhere seen driving a US Army weapons carrier in town."

"Well, yeah," Leder admitted. "The captain who heads up my section has a girlfriend in Phnom Penh. He's always finding a phony excuse to go in 'official' during the day and one of us gets stuck driving him. But he's not dumb enough to leave the carrier parked on the street, where an officer might spot it. I drop him off and head back to base."

"Whenever he's through with his 'official business', he calls the base and somebody comes in to pick him up. If you're thinking of heading the carrier off the great long enough to hide 100 pounds of heroin in it, you're making a mistake. A job like that would take hours and the MPs on the gate know damned well how long a round-trip to town takes. They'd think it was funny if I drove in after too long a period."

undergo strict security checks," Denham declared.

"So did Benedict Arnold," Halvorsen said. "No, colonel, the only smart move is to wait until the contact approaches Frank. He has to, eventually. No one else knows which crates hold the junk — or has access to the compartment where the equipment is stored. Once we've nailed him, we'll tell the captain the facts and radio you in Finsco."

"I suppose there's no other way, Julius," Denham sighed. "But if they manage to get away with that much hardware, you and I will end up stationed in the North Pole. Frank is lucky. He has no reputation to lose."

The Thomas Baker left Bangkok on the morning tide. Loder, who shared a cramped cabin with the two MPs, soon settled into the dull routine of life aboard a cargo ship.

As the seemingly endless days dragged on, Loder polled his regular periods of guarding the locked-up equipment, and the rest of the time eating, sleeping and attempting to figure out who was Chang Li's contact aboard.

The captain — Steven Miller — was a tiny, dour man who barely spoke. The two mates — Sam Ruggiero and Henry Bellows — were cheerful, rugged seamen who did their jobs efficiently.

Halvorsen's theory was that one of the three had to be the smuggling ring's agent. "An ordinary seaman just wouldn't know that much about future movements," he mused.

"But why hasn't he told me who he is?" Loder replied narrowly. "What's the point of holding back?"

"Chang Li has pretty tight security too. Probably tighter. No, I'm dead certain. It's an officer."

The agent — it is Halvorsen's maligned chapter — turned out to be the Thomas Baker's steward, a broad-shouldered, muscular New Englander named Jack Powers. The revelation came on the afternoon of December 17. Just before noon the following day, the freighter was to dock at Honolulu to unload conventional military equipment.

An hour before dinner, Loder was smoking a cigarette and leaning on the aft rail, staring blankly at the ship's churning wake. He didn't even realize that the white-jacketed steward had appeared behind him until a voice unannounced behind him.

"We're taking the junk off tomorrow morning. Who has the midnight to 7 am watch on your cargo? Don't look up."

Despite the warning, Loder was

unable to resist darting a glance at the steward's calm, smiling face. "You're Chang Li's man?"

"Of course. Thought it was an office, didn't you? Well, Sergeant, so one knows more about a ship's plans than the steward. I've got the key to every cabin on the stinking ship — including the captain's. Who has the midnight duty?"

"Private Lamont."

"He's going to get sick after dinner.

Don't worry. Won't kill him or anything. Just slip a drug into his food that'll knot up his guts for a day or so. Volunteer to take his watch and slip the junk out of the boxes. I'll pick it up at 4:30."

"But we aren't due at Honolulu until past noon."

"Do what I say?" Powers snapped.

Frank Loder nodded and the steward moved away.

After the evening meal, Loder told Halvorsen what had happened. "We really screwed up," the MP muttered. "Colonel Denham and half the military cops on the West Coast are just waiting to move in at San Francisco. And all the time the junk was meant for Hawaii! But how is Powers going to make the drop? No sleep until Honolulu, hours after you hand him the packages?"

A moment later, PFC Lamont staggered into the cabin holding his stomach. "Damn!" he moaned. "Must have ate something bad at

dinner."

"I'll send for the ship's surgeon," Loder said. There didn't seem much point in telling the GI that he had been fed a non-lethal Mickey Finn. "And I'll take your watch tonight."

Now that the identity of the ring's agent was known, the time had come to let Captain Miller in on what was happening aboard his ship. After the initial shock, Miller went over his navigational charts.

"At 4:30 am we'll be off a small island about 80 miles northwest of Oahu. It's one of those private rich men's enclaves — a few expensive homes, a marina, not much else.

"But we won't approach within maybe 10 miles of shore," he pointed to a green streak on the map. "Bad coral reef here, just south of the place. Marked by buoys, though. Close as we'll come."

They immediately attempted to get off a message to CID headquarters in San Francisco, informing Denham of the unexpected developments — and got yet another brutal surprise. The ship's radio was dead. "Don't know what happened?" the operator told the captain. "Just kind of blew up in my face."

"You think he's on to us?" Halvorsen asked when they returned to the captain's cabin. "Obviously Powers slipped some kind of time-detonated device into the act."



"Henry, there is something I'd like to discuss with you during half-time."

Loder shook his head. "Just another routine precaution, Helms, Chang Lo doesn't take chances. If Powers suspected a trap, he never would have come near me."

"What will we do?" Captain Miller asked. "Clap him in irons?"

"That would wreck the entire mission," Loder said. "No, we'll go ahead with it — if Warrant Officer Halverson approves. Only instead of heading for Oahu, you'll change course for the nearest island with a short wave radio, contact Denham and the CID at Honolulu, tell them everything that's happened."

"But that means the harem will get out of our hands, temporarily anyway," Halverson protested. "What if we can't track it down later?"

"Just have to play it by ear, see what happens," Loder said.

Halverson reluctantly agreed....

Frank Loder, a 45 automatic slipped on his hip, relieved Halverson on guard duty at midnight. Two hours later, he unlocked the cargo compartment, swiftly removed the glassine bags of harem from their crates and piled them against a bulkhead. Then he returned to the deserted, dimly lit steel corridor and waited for Powers.

The steward appeared at exactly 4:30. Woodlessly, Loder again unlocked the hatch, then gestured toward the stack of harem.

It took them another 10 minutes

to lug the narcoles to a corridor off the galley. Open double doors in the hull — used to dump garbage — overlooked the dark, rolling sea. Powers whipped a gray tarp off a pile of equipment — half a dozen watertight sacks, each attached to two lines, one leading to a steel weight, the other to a hollow float. On Powers' order, Loder helped cram the harem into the bags.

"Don't pitch them over yet," Powers whispered urgently. "Got to wait until we hear the first reef warning buzzy. No use loading all this good stuff to the fish."

"You got the second half of my payoff?"

Powers gritted his teeth, reached beneath his mess packet and brought out a manilla envelope. He showed it to Loder. "Thanks," Loder said, taking the money with his left hand and drawing his .45 with the right. "I really hate being such an ungrateful son of a bitch but that's the way it is. Hands behind your neck!"

A few seconds later Halverson, Captain Miller and two seamen emerged from the shadow of the next corridor. While the seamen hustled the alarm-faced Powers off to the brig, the three men discussed their next move.

"It's clear now," Loder said, kneeling by one of the watertight bags filled with harem. "The line to the steel weight sinks to heaven. Here soaked in some kind of chemical, probably an acid that

becomes active when it contacts salt water. The float lines are clean."

"The junk just lies on the bottom until the weight line dissolves — maybe an hour or two — then the floats carry the harem to the surface. As soon as it's light, the smugglers will move in and simply scoop the bags out of the water. Really smart!"

"But what do we do now?" Halverson asked. "If we drop the stuff off, the seamen will become free — hours before the MPs can reach the spot. Helms just forget the whole thing, Frank."

"Maybe not," Loder said, unwilling to admit defeat after weeks of making his life. "Captain Miller, do you have a motor launch aboard?"

"Yes," Miller replied.

"Then give the orders to cut the ship's engines as soon as we hear the first reef buzzy," he said, hurriedly explaining the rest of his scheme.

Fortunately, a heavy mist lay over the sea at daybreak. The Thomas Atkins had been heading on a changed course to the island of Kauai for nearly 90 minutes.

Loder and Halverson — now wearing merchant seaman's clothing — were not aboard. They sat in the ship's motorized launch, anchored about 200 yards from the reef buzzy, which clanged loudly in the surf....

"I'll be damned if I know how you talked me into this dumb stunt!" Halverson complained harshly. "What if they see us?"

"Not likely in this fog. And somebody has to be able to identify the boat that picks the stuff up."

"Yeah, but..."

Loder motioned him to silence. In the darkness he had abruptly heard the growl of marine engines, muffled by the crowing mist. "This is it!" he whispered, unclipping the holster on his 45.

They never saw the other craft actually retrieve the laden floats. But it was easy to tell what was happening. The engines came nearer, died. Then the faint noise of guns reached their ears.

"They've lowered a small boat," Loder muttered. "Jockeying the floats up right now. Won't take them long. We dropped the bags within 20 feet of the buoy."

Only minutes later, the engines came to life again and roared into the distance. When he was sure their own, small motor wouldn't be heard, Loder hit the starter button.

"This fog will lift soon," he said. "We'll be left without cover. So we've got to get a good look at that damned thing, spot the name on its hull, anything that will help identify it later."



"Your ex-wife called about her alimony cheque, your present wife has started a divorce action, and your girl friend says thanks for the flowers!"

Halvorsen glanced at his watch. "The Thomas Eskins ought to have reached Kona by now. I hope to God Miller gets through on the radio to Deakins — or anybody. And you'd better have guessed right about their heading for that rich bastard's island Miller mentioned."

"Stop it," Loder said. "You're making me nervous. They have to be going to the island. No other port around."

"That sounded like a good-sized boat, Frank. For all we know, they've set course for Anchorage, Alaska. And we'll run out of gas long before they will. Damn!"

Halvorsen was still complaining when a high-powered speedboat roared out of the mist, cut across their bow, circled and slowed down. Two men with submachine guns stood at the rear of the craft, pointing the weapons at the Gls.

"I think you fellows better come aboard," one of them shouted. "Captain's had you on the radar nearly 20 minutes now."

Loder and Halvorsen hastily tried to explain that they were fishermen. Since they had no fishing equipment on the motor launch — which bore the words Thomas Eskins on its prow — the story didn't succeed.

Within minutes their launch had been sunk and the speedboat — with the soldiers aboard — was moving back toward its home craft — a sleek, 75-foot yacht called the Cristobal.

"Some plan," Halvorsen murmured bitterly as they were prodded up a ship's ladder with gun muzzles.

Frank Loder barely heard the warrant officer's words. He knew that it would take all the gale he possessed to keep himself and Halvorsen alive a while longer. Only one advantage remained to him — the fact that the genuine bags the yacht's crew had picked up contained harmless laundry detergent from the Thomas Eskins' galley.

"Okay, we'll try to follow the slots who are after the heroin," Halvorsen had said back aboard the freighter, "but I'll be damned if I deliver the real thing to them. The odds are too good that they'll get to keep it."

Loder and Halvorsen were shoved onto the yacht's wheel house. Waiting for them was a tall, dark-haired man with a lean, tanned, handsome face and wary eyes. Later, Loder learned that their captor was Lester Driscoll, a prominent Hawaiian real estate dealer — and Chung Li's top American representative.

The Gls had been fooled as soon as they were taken prisoner. One of the sailors with the submachine guns



"Yes, sir! I am aware of the responsibilities of the job . . . when you make a mistake I take the blame."

threw their wallets and other possessions on a chart table in front of Driscoll. Among them was the manila envelope containing \$25,000 — Loder's payment for turning the heroin cache over to Jack Powers.

"Wasn't enough?" Loder sneered as Driscoll examined the cash with puzzled, angry eyes. "Me and Powers and Halvorsen here figured out a new deal while we were chugging across the Pacific."

"Halvorsen?" The real estate man growled. "No one named Halvorsen supposed to be involved."

"Brought him in later," Loder replied, "after I realized I was being cheated. A striking 50 grand for bringing you 60 million worth of pure heroin? We figured we deserved at least half-a-million but we didn't know how to make contact. So me and Halvorsen stole the Eskins' motor launch, figured on following you in and making a better deal — once you found out that all you got this morning was 300 pounds of laundry powder."

"I already have," Driscoll replied coldly. "Where is the real stuff?"

"Still aboard the ship, of course. Powers had it where you'll never find it — but he has a way to get it off when the Eskins docks at Honolulu in a few hours."

Through the wheelhouse glass, Loder saw the green, heavily wooded island looming ahead. The yacht was sitting just anchored small craft, headed for the marina.

All Loder could do was continue to play for time until the Cristobal reached its mooring, hoping that Captain Miller had contacted the CID.

The yacht had tied up at its slip before the wary Lester Driscoll at last made up his mind. "This is a lot of crap!" he snarled. "How the hell could anybody lower a motor launch from a moving ship without the crew noticing? And if you were planning a double-cross, why did you bother dropping off the floats at all? The trick is that you've both upped!"

Loder told his stomach sink as Driscoll went out on the bridge and shouted down to a deckhand, ordering him to cast off again. He knew what the command meant — once the yacht was out to sea, he and Halvorsen would be marooned.

As sailors began throwing off the yacht's mooring lines, a loud, flustering roar cut across the water. Driscoll looked skyward, his face tightening with alarm as a helicopter gunship with US Army insignia came out of the clouds and hovered over the yacht.

Simultaneously, more than a dozen MPs ran out of the marina

AUTO-WASH



cellphones and pounded down the wharf toward the Cristobal.

"You aboard the yacht," a voice boomed from a loudspeaker inside the gunship. "Dispose of your arms and surrender. We are coming aboard!"

An instant later, the yacht erupted into violent pandemonium. One of the machinegun-carrying thugs kicked open the wheelhouse door, ran out on to the bridge and sprayed hot lead at the helicopter — a move that even Driscoll knew was crazy. "Stop firing, you idiot!" he bellowed.

Loder and Halvorsen — who had seen gunships operate in Vietnam — instantly threw themselves to the deck, just as the chopper's door gunner opened up.

The first burst almost blew the hoodlum with the machinegun in half. The second smashed through the wheelhouse windows and chewed mangled, gaping holes in the wood bulkhead behind the prone GIs.

When the firing stopped, Loder glanced up and saw that Driscoll had escaped being hit. He was hurrying along the bridge.

By now the MPs had boarded the yacht and were shooting it out with the crewman. The gunship had lowered a rope ladder and more MPs were descending it to the deck.

Driscoll, obviously intending to swim to shore, had one leg over the port ledge rail when Frank Loder caught up to him. He grabbed the gang leader by the back of the collar, spun him around and drove his fist into the man's face again and again.

Suddenly Loder heard quick footsteps behind him, turned and swung at what he supposed was another

crewman — and dropped Halvorsen with a short but vicious punch.

"After all this was over," the dedicated warrant officer said, still flat on his back, "I was going to ask you to transfer to the CID. Forget it."

"That was the end of the show," Sergeant Frank Loder later said in his exclusive interview with the Honolulu journalist. "The Cristobal's crew was no match for a force of MPs. The shooting was over in less than three minutes. . . . You know what happened to Driscoll, of course."

"He's still awaiting trial on narcotics smuggling charges. I think they'll stick. Halvorsen and I had been smart enough to put more than 10 pounds of real heroin in with the decoy — just in case arrests were made and evidence was needed to prove the bastards really had tried to pick up a load of junk. . . ."

Loder is now stationed at an Army post in the Southern part of the United States. For his own protection, the name of the installation has been kept secret.

"Chung Li is bound to have other American allies," Loder declared. "And I'm at the top of their murder list. Right now the government is trying to convince the Thai to arrest Chung himself but I doubt that they'll have any luck."

"Of course, I'll never be assigned to Southeast Asia again — which is kind of a shame. I had to turn over that 25 grand Powers handed me. It's evidence in the case. But Chung's first payment is still sitting in that Bangkok bank, but I can't get it."

"If I ever did, I guess I'd be the richest corpse in Bangkok inside of half an hour."

TREASURE SHIPS OF THE WEST

Continued from page 32

High Edwards, treasure hunter, and prize-winning author, has written a fascinating, historical story describing the fate of the three tons of silver which went down with that Dutch ship, in his book, "Wreck on the Half Moon Reef" (Rigby 1970).

On Gull Island the Dutch crew of the Zeeuyck lived for nearly eight months, while they built a sloop to take them to Java, "In the sandhills," said Edwards, "where the hollows of hills look down on the reef you can still scuff your feet in the sand and unearth fragments of clay pipes, gun bangles and seal bones."

The wreck of the Vergulden Drak (Gilt Dragon) was discovered by Alan Robinson. "I located the wreck at the end of 1956," said Robinson, "while I was swimming off Lanchoa, which lies about six miles south of Lodge Point." Lanchoa is a small fishing town about 80 miles north of Perth.

He had set out with a fishing party, and when underwater swimming with a student friend, Bruce Phelps, they came upon the wreck.

"Yet the import of the discovery hardly registered with us at the time," said Robinson. "It was a jumbled mass concealed with shells and seaweed and we weren't very interested. Something resembling a huge length of timber was angled against a barrel-like protrudence. And further on there was another long, rotting tapered object leaning against the reef, pointing skywards."

A day or two later Robinson mentioned the sighting of the wreckage to a newspaper reporter, and the import of the discovery was then brought home to Robinson. After a visit to the Perth archives it seemed almost certain that the wreckage was the remains of the Dutch treasure ship Vergulden Drak, and the pandemonium was her cause.

Newspapers ran the story that Phelps and Robinson were potential millionaires. But

"You have to be underwater," said Robinson, "to realize the vastness of that collar of an ocean. It has depth as well as acreage. And when there are no markers on the surface of the water, or below on the bed, then it's like searching for a needle in a haystack."

He had a living to earn and a family to support, and six years drifted by before he relocated the wreck. They were six long years of frustration, embittered by doubts and criticism from almost everyone

But he did discover the wreck in 1962, and since then a fortune has been recovered. For the Crown, he found a cross in the wreck which yielded continuous silver coins through pieces of eight for Long John Silver's parrot to bring about for a lifetime.

Among the items recovered were precious pottery jars, brass candlesticks, sheets of lead and copper, and a cartload of ivory tusks.

Hugh Edwards, who helped with the recovery work said, "Ivory, officially, was not part of the ship's cargo. The ivory would have been smuggled aboard by the crew whose pay was small. They bought ivory cheaply at the Cape of Good Hope, and they sold it at a profit on their return to Holland, where it was made into buttons, crossbones, knife handles and record hats. This smuggling was a dangerous pastime. The penalty was hanging."

Yet crews continued to risk their necks.

"Treasure recovered from the Vespulden Drack was enormous," said Edwards. "But the dollar value of articles salvaged from wrecks should never be the predominating factor. Ancient wrecks enhance history, and the riches brought to the surface lend together the years of research work, and the stories unfolded tell of greed and hatred, loyalty and love. Money, too. They are all there. And these stories continue to fascinate me."

Our first link with Europe can be traced back to 11 years before the Tryal wreck, when the Dutch navigator, Browner, pioneered a new trade road through to the Indies instead of sailing up Africa's east coast to get a course due east from the Cape of Good Hope. He kept course for 4000 miles then headed north to Java.

His new trade route — free of the doldrums — cut the usual trip by eight months, and Browner's route became the Dutch East India Company's regular sea lane. But the new line sent ships perilously close to the West Australian coastline.

In 1616 the inevitable occurred and the ship *Rendrecht* was blown eastwards, yet managed to harbor her battered self on the north end of a long island, leaving a bay, which is now Shark's Bay.

Dick Hartog commanding the *Rendrecht* drove a post in the ground of the northwestern shore. He hammered flat a seaman's pewter plate and nailed the plate to the post. The plate was decorated with the words: "1616 On the 25th October there

arrived here the ship den *Rendrecht* of Amsterdam."

Eighty-one years later the Minister, Gasparik, also harbored at the north end of the island which is now known as Hartog Island. He removed the weather-worn plate and took it back to Amsterdam.

Nowhere throughout all Australia has an older European relic been recovered. The plate is now one of the most treasured possessions in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

"In those days the Dutch had no plans to settle in Australia," said Edwards. "They claimed that to be a barren country with the inhabitants black and too poor to trade.

Yet ships have written our white Australian history. And I feel the Batavia has the most interesting story to tell.

"On shore, not far from the beached wreck, we found skeletons of murdered men and women who were killed in the mutiny, which followed the breaking up of the ship. We found skulls split apart from sword clefts. . . . Here seven mutineers were hanged from gallews made of wreckage. Cornelius, the ruler of the mutineers, had his hands chopped off before being hanged."

Edwards has written his impression of the full story in his book, "Islands of Angry Ghosts."

The Batavia is believed to have carried coins to the value of 250,000 guilder. What is the worth of such treasure today? Bronze guns, navigation instruments, coins, skeletons with cleft bones, and dozens of other artifacts, salvaged by Hugh Edwards, Max Cramer, and other divers in 1963 are now on display in the Fremantle Maritime Museum.

In 1970 Edwards led another expedition to the Batavia wreck, and with Neville Wilson of Rottnest Island, he recovered a wealth of precious relics.

They found a Rhenish stone jet, several ornamental buckles, jars which had contained medicinal lubrication, a pair of soft, leather shoes, an embellished cross, lead seal, part of a chemist's mortar, more than a thousand coins, and two barber's bloodletting bowls.

It is known that at least 500 ships have been wrecked along the West Australian coastline.

How do you find the wrecks?

"Unfortunately there are no set rules," said Edwards. "You can spend years diving, searching, with no rewards. You become totally disillusioned. Then one day on the ocean's bed you sight a stranger lying there. She's been waiting for a long, long time — just for you. And suddenly all your searching becomes worthwhile."



"I demand to see a lawyer!"

CRUSOE OF MONTE CRISTO

Continued from page 24

Ha, what a laugh! That half-baked Casperita never remembered about picking me up at the appointed hour. He was too drunk. And I had to take the rap.

I had heard that palm is edible. That is, the heart of the palm is actually tasty and rather something. So with my ball-size scout-knife, the only tool I brought along with me, I chopped away at the layers of fronds around a palm. It wasn't fattuous alla Bolognaise, but let me tell you, it tasted awfully good.

Water I had plenty of. Now all I had to do, until that scound Casperita

I decided to erect a cottage which consisted of four small pods of mangrove wood which I stuck into the ground just at the end of the beach where the foliage began. They looked like two upside-down V's. Then with fibrous strands from the palm I tied long poles to the post at a horizontal position and laid the palm fronds like shingles.

Open at both ends and about four feet high, it looked like a pup-tent. Altogether it took me about three hours — but when done, offixed, it was to me the thing to sit over so humble there's no place like.

In the meantime I became sick of eating palm hearts. I discovered that there were baskets of oysters in the creek. I gathered as many as I could and sapped on them avidly. So for

time to start whooping up the raft-building chorus. It was plain if ever I wanted to get back to the mainland, it would have to be by my own elbow grease.

Making a raft became a must on my agenda, top priority. On the south side of the inlet I found two logs about 18 inches thick. I spent a whole morning and nearly an afternoon transporting the logs to my beach by floating them along the coast. Now I was ready to build.

I didn't have any nails, and let me tell you this was the toughest assignment so far. I would have given the contents of my wallet for even 10 crooked nails. I managed nevertheless to floor my raft and keep it together by lashing five staves of mangrove wood in a gridiron effect. It held. For each I platted strips of cand palm fronds and wove them neatly with separate fibres.

Now with my raft built, all I needed was some co-operation from Old Man Weather. I needed a wind that would keep blowing hard enough in the right direction and long enough to get me to Italy.

Every day I predicted some rain along the coast, sometimes edging as far out as 500 yards before pushing Bertha back with a long pole to toss frims. Finally the kind of draft came that I wanted. It was an if wind but I figured it would blow me some good. I loaded my raft with some food and a small wooden container of fresh water. Then I shoved off.

As the zephyrs buffed me in the direction of Italian soil, I began to worry — what if I couldn't get back to Monte Cristo in case I had to? It wasn't a comforting thought, and it bothered me during the hours I floated seaward. Then the hazy outline of Italy sneaked into view. At last Bertha grazed the shallows about 50 yards from the beach at Laverano.

It was night-time, around 10 o'clock when I waded in the rest of the way. I got to the beach and without thinking what I looked like, I made a beeline for the nearest spring house.

My shirt had long since been shredded off my back, and all that was left of my blue jeans was the part that just passed my equator and halfway reached my knees in tatters. When I walked into the entrance, I must have reminded the patrons of an exhibit in a wax museum chamber of horrors. Yet, wouldn't you know that my so-called pal, Casperita, was right there staring his 4th-power bottle of woe.

Later he came over and remarked as how he hadn't been seeing me around lately. "Where're you been?"

Doctor planned triple murder

A NEW YORK PRISON psychiatrist who never forgave his wife for dumping him, allegedly offered a contract freedom in exchange for murdering his ex-wife, her new husband, and her sister.

Dr. William Kling — twice confined to a mental institution himself before becoming resident psychiatrist at Trenton State Prison, New Jersey, two years ago — was divorced by his wife seven years ago.

"He never forgave her," the former Mrs. Kling's present husband, Mr. Samuel Myers, told the police. "Morally, he couldn't forget her for leaving custody of their daughter."

The police caught up with Dr. Kling when the inmate told the prison boss about the murder offer.

A policeman approached the psychiatrist, saying he was a friend of the ex-wife, and Dr. Kling gave him \$1000. The policeman then identified himself and arrested the psychiatrist on a charge of conspiracy to murder.

Dr. Kling was placed in jail to await trial.

showed up (if ever) was to burn-booze my biggest enemy — Mother Nature, who can be a bullshite when she wants to.

I had to keep myself alive on the uninhabited island while I rigged up some sort of raft with a sail of some kind. Then when the weather was good and the wind was puffing right, I could shove off for Italy and that bottle of Chianti. Also the fettuccine.

Before I could start boat-building I had to pacify myself with the bare essentials. I needed some kind of house, obviously, because the elements suddenly can get cap-tankulous. I found that out quickly.

The afternoon of the second day we had a rainstorm, and I had my first dose of life in the raw. It wasn't just a shower — it rained for a solid hour — a steady downpour with a sky full of lightning and plenty of belchy thunder. I got soaking, sopping, spongy wet — drenched through and through. Plainly, when the tropical rain called it quits, I moved into action.

the first week or thereabouts, I lived on oysters and palm hearts.

Later I made a fish trap with a three-sided fence and a gate by criss-crossing poles bound together by palm fibres. My piscatorial project worked so neatly that when the first tide receded, all I had to do was wade in and scoop up the choicest fish which were mostly mullet.

As for a cooking stove I solved that problem right dandy. Down by the stream I collected a number of suitable rocks and stones. From the creek bed I got clay, and using it as mortar I cemented the rocks and stones into a small furnace.

It wasn't much of a stove but it served my purpose even if it was like pulling teeth to get a fish cooked adequately. To conserve the back of matches I had in my pocket, I kept a fire smoldering constantly and fanned it to flames whenever needed.

To keep track of time I kept a stone calendar. By laying pebbles in patterns I was able to know what day it was. But speaking of time, it was



THE ANCIENT RITES OF BATH

Continued from page 17

The procedure was for each couple to pass through progressively hotter rooms, stroking the body already anointed with oil, with a metal strip or brush, and finally plunging into a cold pool. After that the bathers were ready to watch a play, listen to the reading of poems or take part in a debate — all these diversions being organized on the premises.

A staff of hundreds of slaves would move swiftly and invisibly along underground passages to ensure that the water in the different chambers was always at the correct heat. Barbers, manicurists and masseurs were in attendance to make bathing a luxury.

The Emperor Nero had sea water specially conveyed to his private bath chamber and his Empress Poppaea

Sakura, always took her bath in warm milk — 500 asses being kept for that purpose alone. Most people, however, were quite content to make use of the ordinary river water that the aqueducts carried across miles of wild country.

In all their colonies the Romans built baths and indulged in rude sun and water bathing. But as the power of the Empire diminished the baths became notorious for the excesses that were carried on there.

Some people remained in hot water for hours on end, drinking wine to keep themselves awake. Gambling parties were organized, and the baths were the scene of numerous murders and fights to the death between rivals of both sexes.

At last the early, but powerful, Christian fathers intervened. Nakedness, and men and women bathing together was deemed a sin. The "unpious" baths had to be closed.

As a result the Dark Ages for a long time were dark indeed and the bath tub dropped as a sign of sensual riotous living. The blessed St. Bene-

dict himself had said, "To those who are well, and especially to the young, baths should seldom be permitted."

And this somber dictum tended to be the rule of the day. The poor, common tub, even when it did make a shameful appearance, was humble indeed, a wooden contrivance that was generally rather ugly and always leaked.

But as the centuries passed by, the vicissitudes of fashion and enlightenment lifted the bath up in favor again.

The Middle Ages were not nearly so dirty and unsophisticated as is commonly believed. True, King John only bathed three times a year at the principal festivals.

But Chaucer speaks of bathing without clothes in bathwater scented with herbs, and the Order of the Bath had its origin in the Middle Ages when the new knights were required to bathe at the inaugural ceremony.

Gothic tapestries show rude noble ladies bathing in the open air surrounded by their servants, both male and female, who charm them with music from lute and recorder and hand them box-bones.

Nude bathing was an indoor pleasure only in the finest houses. There it was the unswerving custom for the lady to prepare the bath for the knight dressed and to assist at his ablutions.

The notorious "mud-baths", a crude form of Turkish bath introduced into northern Europe by the Crusaders, rapidly degenerated into brothels.

The ordinary people were grubby in the winter, and in the summer splashed happily together in the open air pools that were the public baths. It was all very casual and promiscuous. Cleanliness was the least important motive for going. Their toilet being necessarily scanty, the ladies competed with each other in striking headpieces to attract the men.

Eventually the immorality grew to such proportions and the danger of epidemics became so great that the baths closed at the end of the 15th Century.

Complete lack of cleanliness dates from the 16th Century. The bath was banished to Stygian darkness and people stunk like the plague.

The great Louis XIV bathed only when at law, and a French daily rule of 1640 advised that an occasional back should be taken, the hands washed daily and the face every day or so.

In 1670 the stigmata of the day gave so far as to advise bathing the



"Better knock off the rain dance . . . the chief just washed his car."

dest. The poet Robert Herrick says to his lady:

*From perfumers and perfumes keep
you free,
Then we shall know how sweet you
be.*

But if the ladies desired to be loved how could they keep free from perfumes when the bath was in such demand? Musk, ambergris, lavender, benzoin were greatly in demand.

What of the 18th century, the age of wit and reason? Its devotee could well be the comment of Lincolnton, a German lady of considerable culture, "I have no use for a bath — it seems to be an over-rated pleasure."

An occasional bath was neither unknown nor unpopular in well-to-do families, but as nakedness was once more a sin, undressed ladies would be draped between sheets on a chaise-longue to receive their friends and lovers.

However, the great health-giving spas were becoming popular, and in England the people flocked to Bath. But even this was considered not exactly nice.

A Dr. Graville, writing at the very beginning of the 19th century, mentions one of these "generalized plunging-baths". He saw people of all sorts and conditions "some of whom would sit about scratching from their hardened cuticles the congregated population of ants, with a hand-brush kept *pro bono publico* (for the good of the public) on the margin of the bath."

While Western Europe was thus whole-heartedly dedicated to dirt, Oriental people continued to practice the art of bathing together as they had done for centuries.

The Jews, the Mohammedans, the Hindus were excessively clean. To them cleanliness really was next to godliness. The Japanese regarded naked bathing as the supreme pleasure. Even the reputedly barbaric Russians and Finns had their steam houses from which peeping devotes of both sexes would emerge to plunge themselves in a river or in the snow.

Fashions were changing again and new influences were at work in England. Soldiers from India were taking home reports of the fastidiousness of the Hindus.

David Urquhart, the eastern traveler, started to fight nightly for the cause of the Turkish bath and for nude bathing indulged in by males and females at the same time and in the same establishment. He wrote that under such conditions "there is an intoxication of dreams that lifts you out of the flesh."

At the same time the Industrial

Revolution in Europe and the New World was spreading germs and disease among the people. The cholera epidemics of the early 19th Century terrified people and by 1840 the battle of the bath was on.

The Association Promoting Cleanliness Among the Poor was formed in New York and London, and public baths began to get built. These were a far cry from the secret clubs of Rome, and the happy-go-lucky pools of the Middle Ages which were merely congregated men sheltered divided into cubicles. The conception of cleanliness, fresh air and sunlight were gradually spreading and before long most Victorian families had their lap baths, or sitz baths, or cold showers.

For a very long time communal cleanliness was an exclusively upper class virtue. The Great Unwashed still cast their dark shadow across the nation's conscience. Even when some poor family did manage to get hold

of a bath-tub it was said they only used it for keeping socks on.

However, the application of ingenuity was not in vain, and the coming of piped water and the glorious birth of hot-and-cold ushered in a new era in the history of the bath.

Hitherto it had hung upon the wall, or stood screened in a corner of the bedroom. Now it was important — it had a room of its own. Mass production in the 1920's cut its costs, and soon most people had a porcelain tub.

Today, the aesthetic aspect of the bath has waned. The science of hygiene has allowed aside the art of regeneration. The Greek concept of naked togetherness has moved to another platform elegant expressing itself in the working of the nude human form with or without the trappings of a bath. The cleanliness and the togetherness are there and so, without a doubt, is the godliness.

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groaned with pain as he felt the wire cut into him.

Arnold rolled him over on deck. Corey stared up at the night sky. Arnold picked up two heavy metal pulley wheels and lashed them with wire to Corey's legs.

Corey's face went white. He knew what Arnold was going to do.

"They'll keep you down — eh?" Arnold said, grins.

Corey stared up at Arnold. "Where's Leone?" he gritted.

"She went ashore with the others. You may as well say your prayers."

Arnold pulled Corey by the legs to the bow. He examined the wire.

"You'll never get loose from this, Corey," he said.

Arnold lowered Corey's legs flopped over the bow. He felt the steel weights pulling him down.

When Corey came to he wondered what had happened. Water seeped down his mouth, gushed from his nose. His head ached.

Dreadfully, he looked up. He was half out of the water, his bound hands looked over an arm of the anchor. Wire cut into his wrists. The pain was excruciating.

He remembered holding his breath as he fell into the sea. He had brushed against the anchor chain. Desperately, he had hooked his bound wrists over the anchor. The heavy weights around his feet kept him down and he had choked into unconsciousness.

It was a thousand to one chance but it had paid off. Arnold, stupefied that Corey was gone for good, had got the wrench working and pulled up anchor. Now the Nancy was heading for a small wharf.

Arnold let the Nancy drift against the wharf. He jumped ashore and made the stern line fast. There was a triumphant look on his heavy features as he secured the boat.

A shadowy figure walked along the darkened wharf.

"It's only me!" Leone called.

"What did you bring up the boat?"

"I got rid of Corey," Arnold said.

"What?" Leone cried.

"I got rid of Corey. We don't have to worry now."

Arnold walked down the wharf towards a dinky it shed. Leone rumped aboard the Nancy.

"You murdering bastard!" she shouted after Arnold.

Corey waited until Arnold's footsteps faded.

"Leone!" he gasped.

"What?" Leone cried. She turned around. "Corey? Where are you?"

"The anchor!" Corey choked.

Leone ran across the dock. She

Quickly she untied the weights from Corey's feet and helped him up onto the dock. Corey felt his binding wrists. He vomited again.

Leone helped him down into the cabin. Corey lay back on a bunk. His eyes asked a question.

"I don't believe in murder," Leone said slowly. She stared down at him, her honey-colored features tight. "All these ventures are full of stolen gold from Kalgosha. The miners steal it, sell it to the IGAs, who resell it to Arnold's mob."

"IGAs?"

"That gold buyer. It's a big racket in the goldfields. Arnold has a market for it in Johannesburg, the Chinese there."

"Huh," Corey grunted. He sat up. "We've got to get out of here before Arnold and the others come back."

"Yes," Leone said.

Corey staggered up on deck. He cut off both lines and let the Nancy

drift. Ten minutes later he started the motor.

There was shouts from the end of the wharf. A revolver cracked, but the range was too great. Corey stood at the wheel and grunted automatically. He turned to face Leone.

"Do you still think I'm an idiot?" he asked. He put his left arm around her shoulder.

"Take your bloody hands off me!" Leone let out. She hadn't changed, Corey thought.

"Okay! Okay!"

Corey grinned. He did not move his arm. Instead, he stared deep into her business dark eyes.

"I know about the gold all along," he said. "I searched their ventures a week ago. I hid the gold in the locker room and replaced it with scrap iron. Do you think I'm an idiot?"

Leone looked at his arm around her shoulder. She did not attempt to remove it. She did not even answer the question.

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WHEN THE MAFIA JOINED THE ALLIES

Continued from page 53

"They waited 10 years?" Scotti said, unbelieving.

"They had to — This was the first time he went out at night without a bodyguard. He wouldn't have gone, except his wife was sick."

"How did they find out he was out?"

"The doctor must have told them. He's a cousin of the Solinas, five or six times removed. Strongo must have forgotten about that."

Waiting a long time for vengeance was part of the Sicilian ritual. The crimes Scotti heard of could have taken place months, years or generations ago. But the blood oath of vengeance was taken on the spot, and from then on the crime family watched, waited and kept themselves ready for revenge.

When it came, it was always when a man least expected it: a shot out of a doorway on a crowded street, the removal of credit from a man going broke, a man taking doctor-prescribed medicine for the first time in his life and getting a dose of poison. To the police, no one had seen anything, heard anything, guessed anything, even if he stood only metres away from the falling corpse.

But within the community, everyone knew — and when the next oath of vengeance was sworn, over the corpse of the new victim, everyone knew that, too.

So it was that everyone knew there was a surprise in store for Scotti, too, when the time was ripe — everyone but Scotti himself. Not even the boy, Romeo, warned him, though he may have tried to give him a hint one day.

"Did you ever look into your people here on Sicily?" he asked Scotti once. "The ones your grandparents came from?"

"No, I don't know if they're safe," Scotti said. "Maybe after this whole thing's over with..."

"You ought to take a look at them," Romeo said, with a strange note of urgency in his voice. But he wouldn't explain, beyond saying: "It would be interesting. Every one ought to know his own family."

It started with the girl waiting on staying in town. "Nothing doing," Scotti said. "You're staying out here with me."

It was uncomfortable and primitive, staying in a shepherd's hut with only the three lean-to walls against a rock shelf, and a sleeping bag on a

strow mattress, but Scotti was certain it wasn't the discomfort that was driving her out. The girl got increasingly nervous.

"There's something up for me, isn't there?" he prodded her. "How did they know where I'm staying?"

"I told them," the girl said. "I had to. Don Calogero was protecting you before. Now he can't anymore. I don't know why it changed." She insisted from then on that somebody stay awake at all times, she or the boy, Romeo or Scotti himself. Scotti worked it out with Romeo privately that one of the two of them would always be awake when the girl was.

The girl caught a bird, put it in a cage, and the two of them always fed their food to the bird first. After one tablet of meat, about three days later, the bird died. They caught another bird, and began the routine again.

The 13th day after Scotti had put himself on guard, July 10, 1943, the Allied forces finally landed in Sicily. The massive army, the largest yet assembled in the West for a single striking force, split into two prongs and began the thrust up the eastern and western coasts of the island. Against the eastern overland, composed of Canadians and English troops, the Italian forces, outnumbered by five to one, undertimed, poorly-armed and ill fed, fought with increasing stubbornness. They were to take nearly 30,000 casualties from the invaders.

But in the west, the day the troops landed, a peculiar ritual was initiated, which eye-witnesses later swore to in European courts of law. Within hours after the landing, the American troops found resistance melting in their path.

On that same day an American aircraft, circling the village of Val-Milaba — the town where Don Calogero was mayor — had dropped a packet. The next day the plane returned again, and dropped another packet, this time right next to Don Calogero's house. The plane had had, fixed to its side, a large yellow silk flag with the blue initial, L, on it.

The packet, which reached Don Calogero the second time, contained a yellow silk handkerchief, again with the initial L on it. According to most of those who have since testified on the subject, including witnesses to the opening of the packet, as quoted in the Italian Press, the L was acknowledged to have stood for Luciano, Lucky Luciano, the American syndicate boss, in a message to the most powerful Mafia boss on the home island, Don Calogero Vizzini.

By the 20th, 10 days after the landing, the Americans had actually picked up Don Calo in a dash made by four tanks, one of them flying the same yellow silk flag with the blue L on it. From then on, Don Calo was to accompany the American troops up their side of the island to Palermo. It was a lightning blitz that, according to General Patton, who commanded it, was "like nothing I've ever seen before — or since." Casualties were light, less than a 20th of what the planners of the invasion had calculated.

But none of this did any good for Franco Scotti, off in the hills, miles from the help of American troops, and slated for death. He didn't even know who it was that was coming for him, but he was certain it was coming. The girl would only tell him that that Don Calo had withdrawn his protection. That had to be, Scotti reasoned, because the capo did not want Scotti around, interfering with

the plans the honored society had for the days when military government came.

The girl still shared his bed every night, even though it could be she that had the assignment to finish him. Scotti had, by his own reckoning, entered fully into the usual climate of the place, where the next man you spoke to, or the woman you slept with, could be the one who would try to finish you off a half hour later — and you didn't even care.

When it came, it was Liggio, one of the younger men in the unit. He had never said an word to Scotti before, except cordial daily greetings. Now, one night, as Scotti worried about a platoon of German infantry that was making a sweep of the hills preparatory to setting up a defensive position, he heard a step behind him and turned instinctively. The first flash of the knife cut Scotti's shirt at the waist. The second slashed

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through his arm to the bone. But on the third slash, Scott moved under the knife, slammed Leggio up against the wall, then killed him, left handed, with his own knife.

The boy, Renzo, explained, partially: "He was a cousin of Natale's. Natale had it in for you because his grandfather and yours quarrelled. He held back while Don Cajo protected you. But no more."

"But if you knew this," Scott said, slowly, "why didn't you call me?"

"I'm a cousin of Natale's, too," the boy shrugged. "I was supposed to do the job myself."

"Why couldn't you do it yourself?"

"Who knows?" the boy said. "Maybe I'll try some day. Or maybe you'll get there before me, and finish me off instead."

On July 23, 1943, Captain Mark Richmond, of F Company, 1st Armored Division, requested permission to investigate reports of a "bandit guerrilla" holding off a full battalion of German and Italian troops in the hills above Sanio Stefano. Don Ciriaco Vizzini, mafia chieftain acting as temporary adviser to American troops sweeping through

the island, recommended ignoring the action and letting "the wicked kill each other off." But Richmond wanted to go where Germans were, and got his permission.

The bandit guerrilla Richmond found was out of ammunition, out of food, and snoring on a couple of pags of wine. It was led by a bearded, dark-featured man, obviously Italian, who claimed to be an American officer. Richmond immediately placed him under arrest and went off after the Germans. The Italian who had been in joint units with the Germans had, as usual in the strange war, mysteriously disappeared.

It was another three days before Scott could get himself identified and present his report to Allied headquarters, which had been temporarily set up at Cisterna. By that time, a lot had happened. For one thing, the Italian Government had all been knocked out of the war. Mussolini, the Italian dictator, had been replaced. It was said that the turning point in his grip on his country was the swift American advance up the western half of Sicily — though, on the eastern coast, the Canadians and English were finding it

tough stepping and taking heavy casualties.

But after the fall of Mussolini, the Allies had a new threat to face — the rise of communist revolutionaries.

"We're sticking with the syndicate boys you wanted," Scott was told, on a confidential basis. "They can deliver the votes, and they can deliver law and order, and they'll stop the communists."

To Scott, it was a disillusionment of the worst sort. Everything he predicted out of that decision to permit the honored society a role in military government, whether official or unofficial, came true.

Mafia ties and other rackets which flourished under syndicate domination of the island spread to the point where, as Franco Scott pointed out in a personal conversation in June, 1973, a recent listing of top international criminals in the dope traffic centered in Bangkok, Thailand, as of early '73, included two names of men he had known in lowly syndicate soldier boy in Sicily.

The names of the advisers to American military government in those post-war years included the men Scott most wanted to avoid, not only Don Cajo, but the Americans Vito Genovese, Nick Gentile (who later told his own adventures as a member of the mafia and adviser to the Italian Press), and Lucky Luciano, released from jail and sent to Italy after intervention with his parole board of an American armed intelligence officer, whose plan, while known, has still not been made part of the public record.

Luciano died in 1962, poisoned, according to Interpol sources, by his own people — just minutes away from arrest on international drug smuggling charges. That same month, Scott has said, he received a gift from Italy in the mail — the head of the bandit Natale, a signal from the other side that the old blood feud was finished.

Nevertheless, Scott has insisted, in interviews during which his part of he had the decision to make over again, he would accept the mission once more.

"If you compare the American casualties with the Canadian and English," he said, "you'll see that we might have had 25,000 more casualties over there, and taken six months or a year to finish off the island. Just one-tenth that number, it would have been worth it."

One of the men whose lives he saved, Gaetano Maggipa, the record also shows, has since gone on to become one of the few democratic politicians in Sicily.



"Yeah, I'm a lady of the evening, but don't let that stop you just because it's only 2.00 in the afternoon."

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ONE NIGHT IN A FOG

Continued from page 58

I wondered how the hounds had somehow managed to get loose, and knowing Harry I had a strong feeling that he must have had a hand in this, but I didn't pursue the subject.

He said, "From kept the hounds half starved and savage for protection, but they were savage even with Frome. They chased him into the swamp." Quietly he added, "The swamp sucked him under."

"So he's dead," I said, "and I don't expect anyone's going to look for him. But what about Denoe? She ought to have medical treatment."

"I haven't asked for any advice, John," he said. "I managed to persuade Frome to talk."

I shuddered. Because no one knew Harry better than I. He could be very thorough.

He said, "Frome told me time's the cure, together with peace of mind. She knows this place. She's known no other home for years now.

Look, I'd like you to get this straight: I didn't want anyone taking any interest in this house, or her. You can tell me I'm jealous, you can think what the hell you like but as I said, I don't intend to share Denoe with anyone. You understand?"

"Sure, Harry." I stood up and moved to the door. I said, "Let's just say I haven't seen you."

At the front door I turned to catch a glimpse of Denoe.

I caught only a flashing side-view of her: the bold jut of her breasts, the long length of her shapely legs, and the clinging of dress material on her buttocks.

I walked out into the front garden. The hounds bayed a mournful howl as I strode off along the dirt track towards the road.

On the stony part of the road I reversed my car and headed back towards the country path. The dark of swampland lay darker now, but coils of cold fog rose at the winter air. They seemed like spirits of the departed waiting their time — to slink back to the house I had left."

DESERT HIJACK

Continued from page 8

"There's just too much country to search. They'll never find that old truck either." The taller man swung at his bottle. Opal was silent.

"About midnight a diesel engine will chug those cars back on to the main line. It will take us through to Kalgoorlie. I've promised the driver a thousand bucks to keep his mouth shut about the cigarettes stocked under all that railway gear."

"Good thinking, Fred," the tall man said admiringly.

Ben crouched by the van, his mind racing. He had noticed the bulge in Fred's pocket and guessed it was a gun.

No good putting up a fight here. He walked silently along the track and climbed up on to the freight car next to the van. He lay on the canvas covering and looked up at the sky.

At last Ben heard the diesel engine. It rumbled down the side track and there was a clang as it coupled with the freight car in front.

The train moved forward. Soon it was on the main line, heading west. Ben listened to the rhythmic clicking on the rails below as the wheels flew past. Suddenly, he stiffened.

A bullet head appeared above the canopy at the end of the freight car. The man held a gun in his right hand. "Okay, buster — you can come down."

It was Fred. Ben looked around desperately. There was no escape. The train was going too fast. Slowly, Ben crawled forward and lowered himself down. He swung into the van, Fred following behind.

"You?" Opal gasped. She stood in the flickering light from the kerosene lamp, her dark features strained.

"Just as well I thought I'd check those ropes," Fred growled. "Who is this guy?"

Opal stood silent, dark eyes wide. "Who is he?" Fred asked. "You recognized him?"

Opal hesitated. At last she spoke. "He's the driver of the steam," she said in a low voice.

"What?" Fred's eyes narrowed. His hand tightened around the gun. "How did you find us?" he asked.

"I followed the tracks, that's all." "Smart bastard, eh? It's just too bad for you!"

"What are you going to do?" Opal cried.

"What do you think I'm going to do? We can't let this mug up off the cops!"

"You're not going to kill him?"



"Point!"

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"I have to!"

Opal walked forward, her features yellow in the flickering light. "I won't be involved in anything like that!" she said harshly.

Fred backed a step. His eyes bored into Opal. He stood thinking for a minute. Opal faced him, all steel, determined.

At last Fred weakened. "Okay. We'll think about it. Tell the barkeep up, Steve." The tall man bound Ben's legs and arms with wire. He cried out when the this wire cut into him. Steve back-handed him.

Ben slung into a corner of the van, completely helpless. He knew that he could not escape. He also knew Fred would not let him live to tell the story. Opal had saved him, but only temporarily.

The train clattered on through the night. Steve fell asleep. Fred sat propped by the door, gun in hand, Opal lay near Ben. An hour passed.

Fred's head started to nod. The beer he had drunk was having its effect. The gun dropped slowly. Ben watched him through narrowed eyes. The regular click-click of the rails dulled Fred's brain. His eyes closed.

Ben felt Opal's hands at his wrists. Quickly and silently she loosened the thin wire. Ben jerked his hand free. He untied the wire from around his legs.

"Jump for it!" Opal whispered. "No!" Ben hissed. He grabbed her hand, tugged. Opal followed him to the open side of the van.

Fred grunted in his sleep. His head jerked, Ben froze.

Fred's head slumped forward again, Ben swung out of the van to the freight car in front. He pushed Opal up on to the freight car and quickly uncoiled the van.

There was a clanging noise in the couplings some apart. Ben held his breath. He stood on the couplings and watched the van drift away.

Suddenly, there was a shout from the inside the van. Fred leaned out the side and stared wide-eyed at the disappearing train. He lifted his gun and fired. A bullet ripped past Ben's ear. Fred fired again and again but the range was too great.

Ben climbed up on to the freight car and found shelter with Opal at the rear. The van slowed, and soon it disappeared into the night.

* * *

As the first light of dawn crept into the eastern sky, Ben took his men from around Opal and set up on the canvas canopy. It was cold.

Opal was awake now. She blinked and looked at Ben, a strange look in her dark eyes. "What are you going to do with me?" she asked.

Ben looked at her. She was very attractive in the half light. Her skin was golden, and the thrust of her breasts inviting.

"Four men partners are trapped in dry country," he said. "There's no escape for them."

Opal stared at him, face set.

Ben gestured. "When we get to the railway yards at Kalgourie, you jump off and disappear." He hesitated. "I hope you find your pot of gold."

Opal looked at him, brown eyes serious. She squeezed his arm gently. "I think I've already found it."

RODS OF THE DEVIL

Continued from page 44

"There's some gents that'll be right glad to hear that," Mark said dryly. "An' necktie parties are still in fashion."

"Outside of Mulmur an' me that Jan finished in here to keep you fellows, you're the only one that know," the gunner smirked. "We won't tell nobody. An' after I get through with you the same medicine as I did that dumb brother of yours."

"Who's dumb, you big baboon?" cut in a voice.

The loose-topped one wheeled, mingled his shot with another, then grabbed at his shattered wrist.

"Jus!" Mark exclaimed.

Jan Kendall picked up the gunner's Colt and jammed it into his belt. "In for us," he chided. "You tickled me, an' I tickled you. There's a thought through here in about 10 minutes, an' you'd better hop it."

"What's the shootin'?" Zeb asked as he stood up.

"Come a runner," Jan said. "Somebody plugged Mulmur, and he's in Doc's office blabberin'. I heard most o' it just like that saddle bum was tellin' you. Right then I decided it was time to come stre."

As the three men turned in at the main street they saw two crowds fast forming. One was at their rig — the other in front of the physician's office. They broke into a run towards their rig.

"We've struck water!" Mark shouted. He plunked a stone into the well. "An' she's a finger!"

A half dozen men swept past



"Care to come over to my apartment after and do a few pushups with me?"

them towards the physician's office. One had a rope. Mark grabbed Jan and Zeb. "Things are really popping now. A riotous party is shaping up."

The crowd parted respectfully to allow the three men to enter the physician's office.

"Well be here, Doc?" Mark asked.

"If that mob outside doesn't get his neck in a noose," Dr Carter answered. "You and Smith have to stop them. Multimer was only a front."

Just then Smith rushed in. "You sent for me, Doctor?"

One glance was enough for Jan and Mark as they stepped outside. Ropes were being waved, and the yelling for blood was mounting. Mark held up his hand.

"Now you cool off while I talk," Mark said. "First off we're going to get to the bottom of this."

"I'll say we are," shouted a farmer. "Multimer was found to get us out of the country so's Jan could grab our land for nothing. We'll get Jan next!"

"It was me an' Mark that Multimer burned," Jan shot back. "Multimer's got a bullet in his groin. He's had enough."

"How about Jan?" a another demanded.

Jan Kendall grinned. "Some of you'll need money to get your walls dug. Most likely Jan will be more than glad to come through, if you don't draw the ax too tight — right now." Most of the men saw Jan's point and grinned.

"I'm for law an' order with no hangin' without a proper trial," put in Moushel Stone. "But Multimer's preacher's false to us needs tendin' to. A lot of us left Parson Smith's church to listen to him here. Now we got to eat crow before we can go back. Not only that, but I made a fool out of myself with you boys."

"Just a minute, brethren," broke in a voice. Smith stood in the doorway. "None of you will have to eat crow — we were all caught in the same trap, and that includes brother Multimer." A dead, shocked silence settled over the crowd.

"Reverend Multimer's wife — whom you all know as a very sick woman — is Jan's sister," Smith went on. "Jan promised Reverend Multimer enough money to send his wife to an expensive sanatorium if he would do this detestable thing."

An angry murmur ran through the crowd.

"I have faith in my brother multimer, and I'm going to do all I

can to help him regain his former status," Smith said. "I would suggest that the Stone head a committee to talk to Jan about that money for Mrs Multimer." He ended dramatically. "But before you go we have another bit of business to attend to. You want with dog. All right, form a line to my right. First come first served — but no shoving."

Jan Peterson tried to get out the back door as the committee headed by the Stone came in. Then as he saw the rope clutched tightly in the farmer's hand his face turned the color of putty. He promised fast.

That night Mark said, "For gosh sake, Jim, go to sleep. If you're plannin' some joke forget it. Better get rested up for all them walls we got to dig."

Jim chuckled. "I'll bet old Stone is still wonderin' how that rope came to be in his hand."

"What do you mean, wonderin'?" Mark demanded suspiciously.

"When Stone was preachin' around pettin' his committee head up I got me a swell idea to sort of even things up for the way he'd doublet us. The old coat was so hot up he never knew when I slipped that rope in his hand." Jim chuckled, satisfied this time. "Jan don't know that, either. But it sure got results."

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TOP END ASSIGNMENT

Continued from page 22

The geologist and his helicopter pilot, Flagg glanced One had evidently missed the kidnapping and had received a deep cut under his eye for the trouble.

"I'm Sweeney," said a fat, balding man in his mid-fifties, detaching himself from the group.

"We heard you would be visiting us," he continued, nodding towards the radio receiver on the bench. His smile was unpleasant. "You lot have a bloody cheek smacking our helicopter and geologist over our exploration area. Now we can get a gun-pusher from Melbourne and worse still - a famous female geologist. This is not the coffee-break in Collins Street, you know."

Helen turned to Flagg. "Tell Billy Baxter that I happen to be a fully qualified geologist with several years of experience in the uranium game." Her high cheekbones flushed prettily with anger.

The fat man ignored her. He stuck his hand flat under Flagg's nose. "You have no right to be exploring on our Prospecting Authority."

"Look, we should not be here - I admit that - but you cannot hold us against our will." Flagg tried to sound indignant.

The fat man laughed. "We offer your company the chance to take a small piece of an interesting prospect and what happens? You break back with us and start your own investigation. So don't give me any of that capitalist having rights."

"Your generous offer did not include blackmail and kidnapping." The radio burst smashed deep into Flagg's mid-rib. He roared back against the Landcruiser.

"Are you hurt, Doc?" The girl supported him. He reached for a cigar from his shirt pocket and his hands shook with anger.

"Just ribs," said the fat man, wiping his brow. "We'll know what to do with you as soon as word that the negotiations are satisfactorily completed is received."

Flagg flicked his gold lighter and the long yellow flame burned into the tip of his cigar. He watched the group with interest. Slowly he turned the tap on the 44 gallon drum which protruded from the rear of the Landcruiser. The liquid splashed onto the dusty boots of the farmer and began flowing across the hardened dirt floor.

Drexell Flagg smiled. He stood with feet apart and the naked flame

held high in his hand. The liquid continued to gush from the container. "Gentleman," he said grimly. "I mean you all to a barbecue."

The fat man levelled his rifle at Flagg's head. His pudgy finger wobbled over the trigger. "You have exactly 10 seconds to put that lighter away and stop throwing."

There was consternation on the faces of the other men in the shed. They stopped leaning casually on work benches and shuffled uneasily. Flagg stood between them and the open doorway as the liquid slowly flooded the whole area.

"Five seconds," said the fat man suddenly. "It was a good bluff but you go first."

Drexell Flagg grinned and the tips of his white, even teeth showed over the edge of his light lips.

"Two seconds!" The fat man's trigger finger tightened.

A banded young man detached himself from the group. "Hold on, Sweeney," he whispered urgently. "This lot has only to drop the flame on the floor and we all fry."

"He won't have the guts for that," said the other grimly.

The younger man saw his fingers through his long hair in desperation. "Why risk it?" His voice came a pitch. "We were paid to look for minerals - not for this." He grasped the rifle.

Sweeney was greatly overweight but he was too strong for the younger man. His fist smashed the other to the floor. It was the chance that Flagg had wanted.

He chopped violently into the fat man's throat. It was like hitting a half-filled gas balloon. The recipient collapsed slowly as if he had been punctured.

Flagg grabbed the falling rifle and advanced the remaining two men who were still deciding whether to attack or retreat. "Now utter our geologist and pilot," he commanded.

It was soon over. The two released men took the camp vehicle and drove off toward their helicopter a mile away over the ridge. Flagg waited until he heard the machine circle slowly overhead and fly off towards Darwin. "Now!" he ordered his early prisoners. "Take off your boots and trousers."

They hesitated, glancing at the slim girl beside Flagg.

"Don't be modest," he smiled. They reluctantly obeyed the command and were then marched outside into the morning sunbath.

"See that hill in the distance?" Flagg indicated a tree covered run. "Start walking towards it - and do not stop until you are well out of range of this rifle." It was a comical

sight to watch four transaction, boozing men gingerly picking their way through the needle grass.

Flagg turned off the now tracking tap of the 44 gallon drum. He backed the Landcruiser out of the shed and flicked climbed to beside him.

"Congratulations," she said coldly. "Drexell Flagg has done it again." Her light blue eyes flashed. "I suppose riding eight hours a year idea of him. If your incredible bluff had not worked we would all be assassinated by now."

The Landcruiser's engine roared and they bumped gently across country towards the coast. Flagg laughed. "The trouble with most people these days is that they have lost their sense of smell. It was only water in that drum - for a leaking radiator."

Helen squeezed his arm. "I apologise," she said humbly.

"It's quite unnecessary." His egoism bubbled brashly to the surface. "This kind of work needs someone who can turn the attention to advantage. It is almost a crime to accept \$5000 for this." The drive back to Darwin and the eventual fight to Melbourne was much more pleasant than the outward journey.

Flagg bounced into his office the following afternoon and found Sinclair waiting for him. "We have extracted ourselves from a rather sticky predicament and cut off all negotiations with that mob of punks," said the thin man. He laughed weakly and his mountaineer's neck along his top lip.

Flagg stared at him with contempt. "You are completely incompetent - even at being unscrupulous. I only cleared this man up to stop the company's reputation being smeared. The sooner they kick you out the sooner the shareholders will get value for their money."

"Listen here, Flagg..."

But Drexell Flagg was already speaking into the intercom. "His that Cramer cheque been cleared by the bank yet, John?"

"Yes, Mr Flagg," came the clear voice of his secretary from the outer office.

The big man walked deliberately around his desk. He lit Sinclair right between the eyes. "Consider that to be the most satisfying part of my fee. Now get out, go back and explain how you got two black eyes!"

Drexell Flagg sat in his own large chair and smiled at around to view the paragon below him. In the fading light the city began to don its evening dress. He wondered idly what plans Helen had for tonight.

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